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HARBOURS OF MEMORY

Books by William McFee

ALIENS
AN OCEAN TRAMP
CAPTAIN MACEDOINE'S DAUGHTER
CASUALS OF THE SEA
HARBOURS OF MEMORY
PORT SAID MISCELLANY

HARBOURS OF MEMORY

BY

WILLIAM McFEE, 1881-



GARDEN CITY, N. Y., AND TORONTO
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
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THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS

First Edition

TO

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

MY FIRST PILOT

INTO THE PORTS OF AMERICAN JOURNALISM

DEDICATION

MY DEAR CHRIS:

At last the moment is come when I can sit down and address you in the full consciousness of a perfect *milieu*. The ship is at rest in a tropical port, all the passengers are ashore enjoying their brief respite from steam-heated apartments, solidly packed subways, and an atrocious city government controlled by a corrupt oligarchy of professional politicians (by the way, why should an amateur politician be considered an angel of light and a professional a son of Belial?) We have not yet reached the critical period of the voyage, when the festive banana comes aboard and causes us much more anxiety than you or any other cheerful consumer of it ever imagines. I myself have dined, and the door of my cabin is locked, to convey the impression to the careless caller that I am ashore. I have, in honour of the occasion, assimilated an immense high-ball, not merely because I was thirsty and needed a drink, but as a part of the significant ritual of dedication. In the immortal words of the London mechanic who used to rise in the old "free-and-easy" forerunner of the modern music-hall, to propose the toast of

some already half-inebriated guest, "I looks toward you, and I likewise cops your eye."

For it is entirely right and proper that I should dedicate to you this collection of fugitive pieces written from time to time as editors and inspiration called, and to which I have given the fanciful name of "Harbours of Memory" incorporating in one phrase two of the most beautiful words in the English tongue. It is entirely right and proper because to you I owe my real initiation into the ranks of what one witty American journalist has called the I. W. W.—the Industrious Writers of the World. To you I owe the encouragement so necessary to the timid soul about to put out upon the wide seas of American literature. To you I owe a most generous and (in my own private opinion) extremely biassed enthusiasm for my work. To you I owe my present amiable connections with American publishers. As Sir James Barrie once said of Frederick Greenwood, "He invented me," so I might point accusingly at you (let us say at André's in a full session of the Three-Hours-for-Lunch Club) and exclaim, "This man resuscitated me." For it is only the truth to say that when, in Port Said of blessed memory, I first received a letter from you, I was in a state of suspended animation.

I say suspended animation because, as I am about to confess to you, my first connection with journalism took place exactly twenty-three years ago, the year

I left school. I often wonder what would have been my career had that first connection proved solid and durable, and had I abandoned, after the manner of geniuses in novels, the profession into which I was being inducted. A fine theme for a novel! I would have worked for some years on the small-town paper, contributed occasionally by stealth (vide Dickens and Barrie) to the metropolitan press, attained a certain local notoriety by my radical political opinions, and possibly I should have been patronized by Sir Robertson Nichol or some other imposing literary mandarin, and become the perpetrator of a few volumes of piffling preciosity in the manner of Arthur Christopher Benson or the late Dixon Scott.

You shudder; but such were my temperament and leanings at that time had they not been corrected by a healthy plunge into a world of callous operatives, energetic executives, and highly fascinating machinery. When I walk through Greenwich Village and become the amused victim of some member of the very advanced intelligentsia, fitted with tortoise-shell glasses, a muffled exhaust and a fixed contempt for everything American, I say to myself, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

Had that first experiment in journalism succeeded; but it did not. It was this way.

Young authors in America to-day, when they turn up their noses at the authors of our day in

England, must remember that we had none of their advantages. Authorship was not only a trade secret, it was one of the holy mysteries. Arnold Bennett had not then written his book on "How to Become an Author." The ready writers were the bosses of the whole literary show. They became editors and dictated the fashion of the hour. They set a genius like Barry Pain writing ridiculous serials and men like George Moore writing absurd articles which no unscrupulous publisher will ever want to reprint. Messrs. Pain and Moore are offered as examples of a disastrous policy because they have survived the tyrannical and short-sighted despots who ruled London and provincial journalism for so long and made the English magazine what it is to-day—a soggy and amorphous affair with neither individual character nor universal appeal.

Put broadly, then, one can say that in those days of the 'nineties, there was practically no market for the young save the precarious foothold obtainable by what was called free-lance journalism. Articles written by experts for popular journals invariably suggested this as the first rung in the ladder. You saw a droll incident in the street and wrote a short article and sent it in. On your way to mail it you saw a man thrown out of a hansom cab, saw him removed to the hospital, obtained his name and address and rushed the news into the office at top speed. Coming back you took your tea at a bakery, and

put the waitress through the third degree in order to write an article on "How the Poor Live." Or you might get an idea for a story out of her. In time you were able to make about as much per week as one of my coal-passers earns per day. What was happening to your soul was not considered. By a singular good fortune I avoided anything of this sort until my soul was a thoroughly seasoned article. Many years later, happening to be in London while Crippen, the notorious murderer, was being sought all over Europe, I sat down and wrote an article called "How to Get Out of the Country," rushed it to the office in Fleet Street, and on the following Thurdsay morning received two pounds in gold. Later, an unusual case of over-insurance of ships came into prominence, and I immediately filled the breach with an article called "How to Sink a Ship," for which I received another two pounds in gold. It was good sport and did nobody any harm; but as a training in literature I consider it about the worst possible.

Indeed, I take the opportunity here of saying, because I know you will thump the bar with your tankard in hearty agreement, that the best training for literature until one is well over twenty-five is to have nothing to do with it. It is, in short, a misuse of words to speak of a training for literature in the sense that a brass-finisher, an automobile salesman, or a monumental mason is trained. We

are fond of saying that writing is a trade, whereas we know that it is nothing of the sort, that the essence of it is not to be determined by the laws of supply and demand, and that one has to make fine and accurate adjustments with life in order to preserve one's soul alive and at the same time convince the purveyors of our personalities that the labourer is worthy of his hire.

However, to return to my early struggles, as the biographies say, I one day suddenly desisted from trying to write historical essays like Thomas Babington Macaulay and wrote a short sketch describing, with an attempt at humour, our local commuting train service. I described our train setting out for the City one morning crowded with young and old, all cheerful and full of hope. Before the train reached its destination, the old had died and been buried beside the track, the young had grown gray, and the locomotive was standing amid moss and fern with birds building their nests in her smokestack. And so on. Broad satire. My own impression now is that I got the idea from somewhere else; that it was not original. No matter. What is wanted in free-lance newspaper work is not originality, but something the editor has never heard of before—a very different thing.

And as I had been brought up to regard all publishing and so forth as a distant and awful mystery, I was too frankly scared of the great London journals

to send my small manuscript to them. It had, moreover, a purely local appeal. Now the local paper which came to the house was the product of changing times. The great railroad had been driven a few years before through the very strongholds of feudalism. It tunnelled under forests where Norman barons and Tudor queens had followed the chase. It gave one glimpses of country seats still inviolate, and, a mile or two beyond, black blotches which were slums of almost incredible squalor. It roared under an ancient monastery, and the great trains for the North thundered past the very portals of the lordly House of Cecil. There was nothing unusual about this state of affairs, any more than in my being free to wander all over Hatfield Park and getting more good of it than the owner, who was the Prime Minister of England. The only conditions he made were that I should not torment his deer nor litter the bracken with paper bags. Nothing unusual in this. England was still the most democratic country in the world. But it had one curious effect on the local newspaper. It was called the "Barnet Press," but it had a number of sub-titles, such as Hedon *Chronicle*, Hadleigh *Record*, and South Mimms *Gazette*. It was a large old-fashioned mainsail of a paper with the inevitable "patent insides" including a dreary serial that nobody read. It was the exact duplicate of hundreds of other papers all over England. It

had, however, this extraordinary distinction. It was not only called the Barnet Press, it was owned and edited by a man named Press—Mr. Truman Press. And one of the principal of the many activities of Mr. Press was the production of county histories and family records. For fifty guineas Mr. Press would go into your family affairs and draw up an authentic précis of your past glories, print it and bind it in blue leather with your crest in gold. There were many of our neighbours, of course, who would have paid more than fifty guineas to have had their past left unmolested, and others who were much more anxious to know the future. Mr. Press, however, had a fair patronage among the distant houses whose windows flashed ruddy gold in the setting sun as one walked through south Hertfordshire. He also catalogued libraries and prosecuted researches into heraldic lore, supposing you had a coat of arms and were solicitous concerning the quarterings.

Mr. Press, as you can very well imagine then, stood for gentility, for law and order, for high Tory and old port for ever. Unfortunately the southern end of our extended suburb was being gradually built up and congested, and becoming distinctly low in tone. With no quarterings of their own, they were prejudiced, in a beery and thoroughly English way, against those who had. On Saturday nights they danced outside taverns in the light of

naphtha flares hung from whelk-stalls. Among these people the Barnet *Press*, organ of the conservative, propertied class, had no following. In as far as they were articulate at all, they were represented by a pea-green sheet called *The Sentinel*, a radical organ affectionately called *The Rag*, whose editor personally covered cricket and football matches, smoking concerts and Methodist tea-meetings, and who put his tongue out, metaphorically, at the Barnet *Press* and its aristocratic tone. Mr. Truman Press did not lie awake at night thinking out replies to the *Sentinel's* cheap and nasty sneers, but he did formulate a play to cope with the changing times and population. He saw that while the *Sentinel* might speak adequately enough for the artisan and the clerk in the small semi-detached houses being run up in scores in Wood Green and Muswell Hill, the tenants of the villas of Whetstone and East Barnet would want something different. The result of his cogitation was a sheet called *The Mercury*, consisting almost entirely of local news and reflecting a political tone slightly more conservative than its imposing parent, the *Press*.

And one evening, greatly daring, I put my little article into a long envelope and addressed it to the *Mercury*.

I have been very fortunate throughout my life. Some kind guardian spirit has ever been at hand to preserve me from premature prosperity. Here were

all the ingredients for that very thing. It seemed as if nothing could save me from being caught up on the crest of a wave of journalism and being whirled into Fleet Street and fame. The very next week I was paralyzed to find my article printed, and an editorial note requesting the author to call. I am obliged to confess that, had I such a situation to handle in a story, I should be in desperate straits to extricate the hero from a successful career in the newspaper world, terminating in the ownership of the *Times*. Nevertheless, the impossible happened. I failed. So did the *Mercury*. So did Mr. Truman Press, for all I know. But first let me tell you how I succeeded. I set out on my first visit to an editor.

It was, as Mr. Conrad is so fond of saying, an altogether memorable affair. I put on my best suit, with a button-over collar too high for me, so that my neck was in torture, and a silk hat. I had to take the train half way into London, to a junction, and then take another train as far out again on a branch line. I can remember the keen spring air blowing along the elevated wooden platform of that junction and the foreman porter coming up with his shining lantern, which showed red, white, or green as he clicked the button, and calling out in a clear clarion voice while the train rumbled in: "Stroud Green, Crouch End, Highgate, East Finchley, Finchley, Woodside Park, Totteridge, and High Barnet! High Barnet train!" I can

remember it, and how the rush of wind along the platform made me hold on to my silk hat. A fine, bustling, cheery place, that junction, with trains to all sorts of Barnets, to Hatfield, to Hendon, and Enfield, where Lamb lived; with imposing corridor trains from Scotland sliding in to have tickets collected, and interminable sleeping-car trains pounding through on their way up the Northern Heights, the safety valves lifting and the throttle wide open as they got into their stride for their two-hundred-mile non-stop run to Doncaster. A fine place at all times, even on Sundays, with touring theatrical folk to make a cheery business of their journey, and sitting with a great show of lace petticoats and high kid boots on the tops of milk cans or piles of theatrical baskets. I can remember all this, I say, and even the jerk of the start up the long ramp to Stroud Green, as the foreman porter sang out musically, "Right Behind! Right Forward!" and waved his lantern like an enormous emerald to the engine-driver, and I put my infernal silk hat on the rack and fell to thinking of what was in store for me. And yet curiously enough, I have no clear memory of the all-important interview. I mean, the thing as I recall it, is all climax, which no editor would tolerate. Let me think. . . .

Mr. Press was about to attack the new public of our suburb from a fresh point. Crouch End was a villa locality, but enterprising builders had

begun what is called, for some reason, a parade. A parade is a street of stores with apartments over them, with wide sidewalks and electric trolley cars running down the centre of the way. Mr. Truman Press had an office in this very new parade, upstairs over a bakery restaurant. Or rather I imagine he lived there, and a green baize office table with a typewriter was the office. From his window he could see the crowds outside the Crouch End Opera house, a legitimate theatre, where Marion Terry was once more creating the part of Mrs. Erlynne in Wilde's comedy, "Lady Windermere's Fan." I stumbled up a dark staircase in the wake of a scornful creature with a dab of white cambric on her head as her haughty badge of service and was ushered into the presence of Mr. Truman Press.

He was tall and had a beard neatly trimmed, and he addressed me, I can remember now, as if I were a public meeting. This did not prevent him being very much amused, privately, at his new contributor, and I discovered, as I hunted for a place to put my hat, that there was a lady in the room. She was seated at a smaller table somewhat out of the light of the large oil lamp on the green baize table. She was dark, and I am ready to swear that she was extremely handsome. About thirty, I should say, so that now she is fifty-three, a very terrible thought indeed. She looked across at me

in a most engaging and delightful way, while Mr. Press looked at the very new ceiling, where a few electric wires had come inadvertently through a hole and seemed to be contorted in a frantic attempt to turn back and hide. He looked up at this new ceiling and spoke eloquently of the pleasure my article had given him. The beautiful lady nodded her assent and my ridiculous mind, instead of being intent on the business in hand, as Mr. Arnold Bennett's would have been, was already busy weaving a romance in which this adorable creature was queen. Mr. Press informed the electric wires that he thought a little article on these lines would be the very thing each week. Treat local news in a humorous way. I undoubtedly—ah—had a certain gift in that direction, which might—ah—prove quite a valuable acquisition.

It was about this time that I gathered that the beautiful lady was the actual editor of the paper to which I was to contribute. Or am I mistaking the story I afterward tried to write, in which the brilliant contributor offered his heart, hand, and pen to the lady-editor, for the facts. I am not sure. As I told you just now, I am hazy about the first part of that interview. Writing an autobiography must be an awful business. And in this particular instance I am obsessed with the magnitude of the climax. Brand-new electric cars rumbled outside the brand-new windows of the Parade. There was

a junction in the trolley wires just in front of the house, and from where I sat on the edge of my chair, still looking for a safe place for my hat, and listening to Mr. Press addressing the wires as though communicating to a distant branch of my family what he thought of me, I would wait for the trolley to jump that junction and emit a fat blue responsive spark. Mr. Press would say that he was agreeably surprised to find literary talent in the neighbourhood, and the trolley would go "phutt!" in hearty agreement. Mr. Press was sorry he could not offer a very high honorarium, as the paper was not yet on a paying basis; and the trolley would echo "phutt!" indeed not! The house trembled a little as the traffic increased. People were going home and other people were going out for the evening. The unanimity with which the trolley agreed with Mr. Press was beginning to numb my intelligence, but I retained sufficient presence of mind to inquire the amount of the honorarium. Mr. Press looked hard at the wires in the ceiling, rubbed the point of his beard as though to see if it had been singed, and replied that he would be happy to give me a check for. . . .

At this moment the end of the world seemed to arrive, for the ceiling around the wires suddenly became convex, broke, split, and fell with a frightful crash, demolishing the lamp and leaving us in darkness.

A trolley rumbled past, said "Phutt!" and disappeared.

In recent days, in England, the explosion of bombs in the streets, the fall of roofs, and the very actual wrecking of homes so that horse-hair sofas have been found in neighbouring yards and antimacassars ruined beyond repair, have all become so common that only the final disaster of sudden death seemed to call for comment. In the 'nineties, however, we had not discovered how very heroic we could be. A cloud of dust from the plaster which presently began to settle on our clothes and deposit itself in our eyes, ears, and noses, seemed to be the only material damage we had suffered, for on candles being brought by the haughty domestic even my hat had escaped, and the typewriter, lying amid large slabs of ceiling, was unharmed. The lady, of course, was pale but very brave, and the haughty maid was immediately dispatched, at top speed, to the nearest tavern for sixpennyworth of brandy as an infallible restorative for shattered nerves.

I need hardly say that it would have been the limit of tactlessness to attempt any further discussion of terms. Whatever honorarium Mr. Press had had in mind to offer, it was evidently displeasing to the gods. Perhaps it was on this account that, after contributing a half-column per week for four weeks, I received a check for the princely sum of one

pound. I have at times had disquieting thoughts on this subject. Even now, after twenty-three years, I am far from decided whether I would have received more, or less, had not the heavens fallen. You can see by this story that my induction into literature was full of omens, good and evil. The point, however, is not that I waxed rich or even that I afterward failed to spin from my own entrails the required shimmering tissue of satin satire for a weekly half column in a neighbourhood which was really only a large dormitory for tired business men. The point, the radiant asterisk in my life, is that I began to cover a sheet of paper without being actually aware of the passing of time. For the first time I sat down night after night, to the detriment of my studies in engineering, and wrote page after page of entirely worthless fiction. Do not be alarmed, however. I am not on the brink of telling you that this was the happiest time in my life. It was not. The artist in his teens who is happy is a charlatan. Life comes bursting in all around us too suddenly, too crudely, too cruelly, for happiness. The young artist who is worth his salt knows, and oh the agony of it! that his prolific outpourings are only the clumsy imitation of a prentice hand. No, it was the unhappiest time of a fairly happy life, I think, for it is a bitter experience when one offers everything to a goddess and she turns her face away.

It is rather a solemn thought, too, that her face

remained obscure for ten years. Ten industrious silent years, a sort of Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, during which I served my turn as artisan, draftsman, salesman, and seafarer. Looking back, one is constrained to marvel at the extreme confidence with which one watches the priceless and irreplaceable years go by. Life seems long and art short when one is young. Perhaps it is best so, for there is a touch of tragedy about the modern middle-aged artist with his fine gift for expression hampered by a faulty inadequate equipment.

But I need not remind you that we now live in an age somewhat different from the Arcadian simplicity I have been describing, an age in which an inadequate equipment is no bar to any of the professions, an age in which unscrupulous swindlers angle for the money of simpletons by proclaiming the ridiculous facility with which art, law, medicine, and literature can be mastered, an age in which every other young lady is taking a course of short-story writing or scenario-drafting, or advertising. This is our age, and we must live in it. We must accept it, and with it one of its most momentous and significant features—the modern editor.

Has it occurred to you that the subject of editors has never been courageously handled by authors? I am aware the subject is full of difficulties because by the time a man has reached a position which justifies him to speak with authority

he has established so many pleasant relations with certain editors (cunning men!) that he is content to let the others stew in their own juice. But this is only begging the question after all. To the artist all subjects are legitimate copy—and this includes editors. Shall a man refrain from writing critically of women because he loves his wife? However, realizing the reluctance of the novice and the wealthy alike to disturb the editors in their lairs, I step nobly into the breach.

The fact is many editors have permitted their enthusiasm to run away with them. This became markedly manifest during the Great War. (I specify which war I mean because outside of my window in this tropical port, I hear the tramp of armed men, the legions of Costaragua going up in their harness against the path of the neighbouring republic of Contigua.) Editors felt they must stimulate at all costs the pens of those in the field. They succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectations. Articles, poems, and novels were written under fire. Lyrics were penned in mid-air, and odes in submarines. We suffered temporarily from an embarrassment of riches. Young ladies in naval transport offices planned fictions beyond the dreams of Brontë or Mrs. Gaskell, and I myself have come suddenly upon a naval captain waiting to see a literary agent and looking very sheepish about it. The thing became a joke and one foresaw a comic

rearrangement of the future, when the authors would outnumber readers and editors would commit suicide in droves.

I say the thing became a joke; but alas! it was a joke taken all too seriously by many of the young authors thus ruthlessly dragged into premature publication. They could not see that the war was not going to last for ever. They could not see that when hostilities ceased and the inevitable reaction came, it would no longer be possible to inflict their amateur performances upon a sickened public. Particularly was this so with the poets. It is the one thing I cannot bring myself to forgive the editors, this bolstering up of false hopes of a public for poetry. It was cruel, it was almost wicked. These young bards should have been put quickly out of their misery. For the war was their sole inspiration. Now we are so sick of war that we are ready to fight anybody who proposes it (if the bull will pass) they are wondering what is the matter with them. Not only is their poetry no longer in demand—they are no longer able to sing. Let us take, as a concrete and illuminating example, our mutual friend, young Sniffkins, the Oxford man who was over here not so long ago. You will remember that in 1914 he joined up straight from the university, got a commission, and was soon in the thick of things in France. And he began to write. Or rather he had found a subject. It was all so very

new to him. Life outside of his own little upper-class circle was a novelty to Sniffkins, I imagine. There was something really quaint in the splendid way the men took their hardships. They were English, of course. Had he gone to work instead of to Oxford, or better still, had he gone to sea, he would have found that men, whether English or Chinese, Latin or Slav, are extremely lovable, admirable and staunch and the most interesting creatures on earth. But the very newness of it all was an asset, and he began to sing. He wrote fine little poems and they were printed. Later they were collected and had a notable sale in book form. The war went on and Sniffkins wrote more and more. I think he had four volumes of collected verse when his American publishers suggested a visit. The armistice provided an opportunity, Sniffkins got leave and came over on a lecture tour. He was "one of our coming writers." Pugson, the lecture agent, got him really very good terms, for we were in the middle of the Great Spending Era, the Silk-Shirt Age, and while our workmen were paying ridiculous prices for sumptuous underwear, our intellectuals were putting their minds into all sorts of expensive and fancy suitings. Sniffkins came, was photographed and interviewed, and I am rather afraid New York made him a little dizzy. We were exporting Russian Reds and importing Oxford Blues in those days, you will remember, and doing

both with enthusiasm. A young Englishman, whose travels had been limited to the Western Front, could not be expected to assay accurately the highly specialized atmosphere in which he found himself. It did not occur to him that he was not really a representative English author, that in London he was practically unknown or that apart from the war he had done nothing. It did not strike him as odd that neither Kipling nor Conrad nor Robert Bridges were prancing about the United States exhibiting themselves as representative British authors. He had no time. Between Pugson and his publishers he was too fully occupied to think. He dined in clubs in Gramercy Park and met a large number of people who specialize in welcoming visiting lions. He gained not the slightest insight into American life because he had no time. He lectured very well, I believe, though of course his reading was far from extensive, owing to his early enlistment. There was a certain rise in the sales of his books and things looked very rosy. American women have an intoxicating way of making you think they are genuinely interested in literature and also in your own temperament. It is their shining gift, fatal to visiting poets. They are not interested in literature, of course, as you know—only in making an effective pose. Fortunately for Sniffkins he did not stay long and when he boarded the steamer for Liverpool he was in a mood

to bless America very heartily. There was no doubt about it—he would continue to write.

But writing when you are an officer, drawing officer's pay and living in the mess, and writing for a living as a civilian, turned out to be quite different affairs. I wonder, by the way, what has become of Sniffkins. I saw one or two poems in different magazines, an article on the Modern Trend Toward Free Verse in a review, and——well, that's about all. I am inclined to think he took that job in his uncle's wine business after all. But I imagine he did some very thorough thinking in the interval, getting it definitely into his system that the war was over and that authorship, like every other art, cannot be conquered in a week. And what would he write about anyhow, now his one subject stinks in men's nostrils? He knows nothing. He has read, comparatively, nothing. His tin-pot poems, compared with the mighty works of real poets like Swinburne, Rosetti, Morris, and Kipling, are equivalent to the traditional hill of beans. His lecturetour must be a peculiar memory for him nowadays. . . .

And you know, it was all the fault of those editors. Fame is heady stuff, and Sniffkins was made squiffy with it. Instead of getting his adversity first and his prosperity by gradual degrees, he had the process reversed. And with all due respect to the editors, an author is not a race-horse or a professional

pugilist. The great thing to do with an author is to let him alone. I feel sometimes like writing a new declaration of independence for authors. I feel like saying, in a loud voice, "Leave me alone. Keep away with that auto-suggestion business. I have all sorts of ideas in my head that you are not aware of, and with your permission I want to enjoy them myself before I work them out. I know perfectly well that I am indolent, but that is the inalienable right of all artists. Otherwise we might as well be artisans and punch the clock at eight A. M. every morning." And there is always this infallible argument, that even if a man only writes a thousand words a day, he will have written three hundred and sixty thousand words in a year, which is a hundred and fifty-thousand too many!

And that reminds me that there are already too many words in this dedication, though a good argument might be made out that dedications do not count, and that a man should have the privilege to ramble on as long as he likes. It is certainly a captivating department of literature and one might easily form the habit of writing books merely as appendages to one's dedications. For how many books should a man write? I for one believe he should write one for each of his friends, one for his mother, one for his wife, and, if he be one of those extravagantly emotional beings who provide so much amusement for their friends nowadays, one for his mistress as

well. I would even permit him one more so that he could dedicate it to his publishers, and it would be a worthy deed.

Here, then, I offer you, in token of my undiminished esteem, these Harbours of Memory. Neither you nor I have been able to run our minds into the conventional, snappy, short-story mould of the modern arsenals of fictions. While you write too much and I too little for our own good, we are, both of us, the despair of those estimable and idealistic fellows, the editors of "red-blooded magazines for he-men," who are for ever galloping about, looking for stories with "action" and "plot," with "punch" and "pep," and a long list of other stimulating qualities. Not that we lose sleep over it. It is the artist's prerogative to be immune from the toilsome worries of industrious compilers. You cannot down him, for his joy is within himself. All men pay tribute to his whimsy, which can never be isolated by the synthetic process or reduced to fine gray powder by the most subtle electric analysis. Even editors are the delighted victims of his elfish fancies. So we lose no sleep. You add each day to the gaiety of the nations from your office in Vesey Street, while I slip down through the Narrows into open sea.

WILLIAM MCFEE.

S. S. *Santa Marta*
March, 1921.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
HARBOURS OF MEMORY	1
THE CRUSADERS	22
THE CITY OF ENCHANTMENT	68
A NEW METHOD OF REVIEWING BOOKS	92
ON A BALCONY	112
THE SHINING HOUR	132
KNIGHTS AND TURCOPOLIERS	147
SOME GOOD BUT INSUFFICIENT REASONS FOR SILENCE	208
THE IDEA	226
LOST ADVENTURES	238
THE MARKET	246
RACE	252
THE ARTIST PHILOSOPHER	278
A PORT SAID MISCELLANY	293

HARBOURS OF MEMORY

HARBOURS OF MEMORY

As I follow my old friend and shipmate along the dockside and across the narrow gangway to the deck, someone pulls the lanyard on the bridge, and the whistle, clearing its throat with a gurgle of condensation and covering us in a fine spray, bursts into a hoarse bellow that reverberates against the tall, stark warehouses, with their wet roofs, dingy windows, and projecting cranes, and seems to vocalize, in a very epigrammatic manner, the clean, cold sharpness of the spring day, the brisk bustle of business, and the energy of the easterly wind that is drying up the puddles between the tracks on the quay and sending the exhaust steam from the winches in feathery swirls round the flapping red ensign on the poop. The carpenter is hammering home the wedges that batten down the hatch tarpaulins, and the second officer, an old badge-cap on his head and dilapidated double-breasted uniform coat buttoned up to his chin, is superintending the lowering of the cargo-derricks.

Laden with heavy portmanteaus and followed by a ragged, knock-kneed, shifty-eyed gentleman bearing a large canvas sea-bag on his shoulder, we pass

along a narrow alleyway and enter a small cabin over the door of which is a shining brass plate marked CHIEF ENGINEER. We deposit our burdens, and the shifty-eyed one, who takes one or two swift and all-embracing glances about the room, with a view to some possible future enterprise, is paid off and escorted out on deck. My friend murmurs something about "seeing the Old Man" and goes out, leaving me in the semi-darkness of the cabin. There is no electric light on this ship, for she is one of the old tramps which ploughed the ocean in the days before dynamos were cheap or wireless compulsory. A sturdy, two-decked, schooner-rigged, single-screw contraption, with wide hatches, accommodation amidships, and no patents. A comfortable ship. I can feel the railway-rep upholstery of the settee, and the walls gleam white as the enamel reflects the light that eludes the green silk curtains of the ten-inch window. I get up and strike a match to light the shining brass lamp that swings on its gimbals by the bunkside. Many a mess-room boy has rubbed industriously at that lamp as he looked curiously at the books on the shelf just above it. Now the lamp is alight, I can see them, a double row of heterogeneous volumes from "Breakdowns at Sea," to Robert Browning's "Pippa Passes"; from naïve sensuality to naked wisdom. I take down a book —neither sensual nor wise—and, sitting again on the settee, wedged between the

sea-bag and a portmanteau, I open the book and for a short while lose myself in its pages.

And it is not very long before we are outside, going down the Estuary in the sunlight, pass the low-lying shores with churches and mansions and factories in the dim distance, past the ruddy-sailed wherries tacking up toward Gravesend, past the tall liners from Australia and China coming in on the tide, past dingy colliers from the North and long black meat-ships from the Argentine. Past all these, until the shores fall away and leave us alone on the gray-green tumbling water and we begin to feel the motion of the ship, and we go in to arrange our dunnage in the drawers, and write up our logs and plan the work of the coming days. And among the dunnage there will be books, to while away the longs hours of the watch below, which isn't "below" at all nowadays, only we keep to the phrase for the sake of the days of sail gone by. There is a pleasure unknown to the landsman in reading at sea, and you may know the experienced seafarer by the stock he purchases in the store where they sell chronometers, sextants, and nautical almanacs, besides books and pencils and writing-blocks and tag-labels for baggage. Such stores cater for all of us, from the skipper who likes fiction which is certainly not meat for babes, to the mess-room boy who follows Nick Carter through thick and thin, volume after volume of thrilling adventure.

They cater for the grave-eyed, ruddy-faced apprentice who desires greatly to improve himself; who feels inarticulately enough, that he is missing something his brother at college is getting, and buys serious books in a pathetic endeavour to fit himself for that splendid command with which his boyish fancy is occasionally preoccupied.

Midway between the earnest student who uses books to rise in the world, and the blasé patron of debilitating fiction, to whom reading is a narcotic, you find most of us who take books to sea. As the ship ploughs her way southward toward Gibraltar—for we passed St. Catherine's Point some time ago—so I plough my way, horizontal in the bunk, the silk curtains drawn over the little scuttle, the bright, brass gimbal-lamp swaying to the gentle motion of the ship, through Gibbon's majestic volumes. The very uselessness of so huge a mass of magnificent information gives an added charm to a jaded seaman. One reads only to enjoy, as one imagines men of vast wealth and ancient lineage adding luster to their names by a dignified patronage of the arts. For we are, after all, wealthy in experience and the tradition of our calling, and the literature of politics and sociology and commerce makes no appeal to us. The somber realism of modern human documents leaves us cold. What we desire above all is colour and a grandiose conception of human life. We want barbaric splendour portrayed against

backgrounds and amid scenes of ravishing beauty. It is true we often do not know where to find all this. We go astray, led into trivial blind alleys of deleterious sensualism by some lurid wrapper or pinchbeck reputation. But Gibbon is the real thing. Day after day, chapter by chapter, the narrative rolls on, the orderly rhythm of the day's toil and repose weaving harmoniously into the complex texture of the story, until the Ligurian mountains above the marble city of Genoa stand sharp against the dawn, and the tall lighthouse guides us into our berth against the breakwater, to which a ladder is let down from the poop, and along which in due course we shall go ashore.

For once in harbour, of course, Gibbon is put away. There is a time for everything, and it is emphatically not time for grandiose historians when one can go ashore. The mood changes. Ada, for instance, would not harmonize, with the "Decline and Fall." No one can imagine Ada either declining or falling. She comes aboard with her little leatherette case of sample bottles of Ligurian wine on her arm, seats herself beside me on the settee, and regales us with a joyous version of the gossip of the port. Ada was a very pretty girl in her teens, which was not so long ago. Her deep-blue eyes, tawny hair, pink cheeks, and voluptuous modelling remind one of the coloured illustrations in a Christmas supplement. Her nose is delicious, and when

she throws her head back to laugh, showing two rows of big white teeth, it is infectious. She is a formidable example of virtue vociferously triumphant. She invites us all to go up to her little place and have supper before coming on board. We accept with enthusiasm, and Ada, repacking her absurd sample bottles of wine, which looks like red ink and probably is, announces her intention of going up to say "chin-chin" to the Captain before stepping ashore.

We meet her again later in the Galleria Mazzini, where is a bookstore and a shop where you can buy the pipes and tobacco Englishmen love. She suggests a drink in the Orpheum, and into the Orpheum we go—a long room lined with little tables, waiters hurrying about with miraculously balanced trays of drinks, and an orchestra of young girls perched high up half way along. The tables are crowded; but Ada, magnificently attired in blue velvet and nodding plumes, leads us to a corner, where a waiter produces additional chairs, apparently from his sleeves, and sweeps a score or so of empty glasses into oblivion. Ada, seated with her back to the wall, beams upon us and takes my book to examine it. She says it is good. She had read and likes it, which is probable enough, it being D'Annunzio's "Contessa di Amalfi." Ada comes from the country near Pescara. She tells me to get "The Sea-Doctor" as well. Over "The Knead-

ing Trough," which seems to be untranslatable, she says she has cried. It was from Rimini, sun-dried relic of the past, that she went to Bologna, and under the dusky arches of that old town met her dear Settimo, who travelled in wines. Settimo had ambitions toward ship-chandlering and settled in Genoa, which suits Ada, who likes life. By life Ada means, I fancy, happiness, for she is a joyous soul. If she could only have a baby her cup would be full. So far that is denied her. The last time I was here there was much talk of Ada having a baby, but just before we sailed Ada herself, accompanied by Settimo and her inevitable sample-case, came on board and told us it was all a mistake and they hoped for better luck next time. Of course Settimo does travel in wines, and makes a fair living without ship-chandlering, which requires more capital than he can command yet. He is a dried-up little man with black eyes twinkling on either side of his sharp nose, and he wears a small tuft between chin and lip that imparts dignity and which he is always disturbing with his thumb and finger. He has a striking resemblance to the foreign count in a film drama. He says things, too, which I cannot catch, but which send Ada into shouts of laughter. After a drink or two we go up there, high up among mysterious streets which defy any charting in one's mind. We only know that if we keep on going down-hill we shall eventually reach the harbour. As

we leave the Orpheum, Ada waves her glove amiably to one or two of the *habituées* and they wave back. She is sorry for them. I wish the phrase "easy virtue" had not been assigned so sinister a particularity of meaning, for it would otherwise describe Ada exactly. She is virtuous and it sits easily upon her. Without being at ease in Zion, she has a delightful charity and breadth of view. As we go out into the Piazza di Ferrari we pass a horrible old bag of bones who apparently has been flung in a corner of an archway with one cadaverous claw extended. Ada demands a lira from one of us, and, on receiving it, puts it in the cadaverous claw, which is thus galvanized into movement, for it withdraws into the bag of bones and protrudes again slowly, empty.

If there are no babies, Ada's home is full of compensation. Most of them have four legs, and include two cats, black and white, four kittens highly camouflaged, and a poodle of imposing presence and advanced age. Other compensations have two legs and live in cages—the canaries by the window; the parrot, who immediately asks us if we want a cigar, want a cigar, want a cigar, by the sewing-machine behind the door. Others, again, have no legs at all, and swim round and round in a large bowl upon which the canaries drop seeds and pieces of cake. All save the last—and, whatever naturalists may say, goldfish are not demonstrative in their affections—are made much of; and the parrot, on being

offered a cigarette, alludes to his grandmother and utters a piercing shriek. Ada's furniture is very Victorian and is particularly rich in antimacassars, wool mats, fretwork brackets with satin backs, plush frames, and tinsel balls on elastic strings. As the Second Engineer remarks, it is a home from home, for your seafaring man appreciates snugness. If there were any doubt about Ada's virtue, one look into her parlour would dispel it for ever. One look at Settimo, sitting by the table with the poodle at his knee and a long, thin cigar in his fingers, would make one wonder how it had ever been entertained. On the walls are Settimo's parents, life-size, in gilt frames. Opposite are the inevitable Garibaldi and Vittorio Emmanuele. On the mantel is the inevitable model of a ship in a bottle, the ebony elephants with celluloid tusks, and a money-box in the form of a wine-cask. Ada bustles out and helps a diminutive daughter of Italy in a black apron to bring in the supper, which consists of fried mullet, spaghetti served in oval dishes, a sort of pudding made of rice, dried fruit, hard-boiled eggs, minced veal and curry, artichokes served with olive oil, and one or two other things none of us shows any desire to investigate. Ada makes coffee, and the big flask of Asti on its plated swing-bracket is well patronized. We all take a gallon or two away with us when we leave Genoa. Settimo has a joke about his wine, which, he says, does not travel far. He means we

never give it a chance. A copy of the *Corriere della Sera* is spread on the rug and the cats forgather radially round the mullet bones. The poodle, somewhat too large for the crowded room, insinuates his weirdly tonsured person among our knees.

Ada regales us with items of interest in her world. So-and-so is dead. So-and-so, junior, has married and gone to America. A friend of hers, a domestic in a big house in the Via Carlo Dolci, has just won a thousand lire in the lottery. She is going to Ventimiglia to visit her aunt. The Second wants to know if she is good-looking. "*Si, si!*" responds Ada, and the parrot adds with deafening corroboration, "*Si, si, Maria!*" and gives the poodle a look of piercing inquiry. Yes, indeed, asserts Ada, flapping her napkin at the bird, as we might have seen had we been up the previous evening. The Second, much agitated, desires an introduction if the lady is yet unengaged.

"Oh, go on with you!" says Ada, throwing her head back to laugh, and the parrot, with a perfect torrent of shrieks, hangs upside down on his perch until, finding no one taking the slightest notice of him, he readjusts himself and attends to his neglected toilet. What, go after a poor girl's money in that shameless manner! Ada is shocked at the calculating villainy of the Second. Besides, she has a sweetheart. The Second slumps back in his chair and assumes a look of despondency. He says

that ever thus from childhood's hour he'd seen his fairest hopes decay. Settimo, examining his long, thin cigar, as is his way when about to enunciate something in English, remarks that the Second has a tender heart. The Second sighs with his eyes turned toward the ceiling, and admits the soft impeachment. Always had, from a child. The first time he met Ada he was smitten on the spot. Took to drink when he found she was married. Tried to drown dull care in three litres of the best chianti. Care still coming to the surface, was finally disposed of in a pint of rum.

So the talk goes on, and I fall to wondering how it is that, in the literature of the Latin nations, the Englishman is always cast for the part of a rather passionless stick, a dullard, an unobservant fool. I suppose it is because we have been chiefly represented abroad by those embodiments of dignity and self-conscious smugness—the governing classes. Young milord, doing the grand tour, taking with him his servants and horses and carriages and a clerical governor, for ever reminded of his majestic destiny as a ruler of England, fresh from one of those intellectual cold-storages, the English public schools, is largely responsible for this tragic misconception of our character. To read a novel of France or Italy with an Englishman in it, one would imagine us destitute not only of wit, but of humour and all human kindliness. In that *Corriere della Sera* on

the floor is a serial in which one of the characters is an Englishman in Rome, a most lugubrious Englishman. He is, of course, the conventional heavy Englishman, just as in England we have the conventional frog-eating French schoolmaster and the conventional Italian waiter and drawing-master. The Second, in common with most of the other young seamen I know, belies this character. Without much culture, he takes the world of sentiment gaily. The Chief and Second officers, who are married, are very much the same. The Third Engineer, not long at sea, listens and joins in the laughter, which is continuous. This foreign atmosphere is novel to him. Once he had rid himself of the funny English suspicion that every well-dressed foreign woman is lax in her morals, he will lose his shyness and carry on with the best of us. He comes of the happiest class in England—the lower-middle—the class with the most adaptability for either good or evil fortune, the keenest brains and most dexterous hands, the only genuinely democratic class in England. If Ada were to live in England, you would find her in this category. And perhaps, if she does eventually have that baby, he may turn out to be the genius for whom Italy is waiting, who will do for Genoa what Dickens did for London, and reveal to us the teeming life, the tears and laughter, of that city by the sea.

Not that Italy is without geniuses as yet. I know

one in particular, and, sure enough, he is down to the ship the next day. While I am in the engine-room, discussing a job of work with the Second, who is extremely dirty and cheerful in spite of his sentimental misfortunes, the Mate calls down from the top grating.

"Are you there, Chief?"

"Aye. What's the trouble?"

"One of these Eyetalians wants to see you. That young fellow who was aboard last time, you remember?"

"Oh, all right. Tell him to go into my room."

When I go up, a short young gentleman with a sallow complexion and large, black eyes jumps up from the settee and bows. This is Mr. Ricardo Bertola, the genius aforesaid.

"Good morning, Mr. Chief. I saw in the newspaper your ship was in and I have come to ask you a question."

"Why certainly! What is it this time? Sit down."

As usual with Mr. Bertola, it is a word in a book. He produces the book, which is an edition of Beowulf. Not satisfied with a good working knowledge of every language in Europe, including (as the copyrights say) the Scandinavian; not even happy in his familiarity with Greek, Latin, Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Sanscrit, Mr. Bertola craves a diploma in English literature. Gifted with an exquisite ear, he learns

most of these tongues by conversation. Our carpenter cannot understand a Dago talking Norwegian without ever going to Norway. "He spick better Norwegian dan me!" he admits, in wonderment. He does, no doubt, for he speaks better English than most of us. He has that amazing gift of tongues which leaves the rest of us dumb. But when it comes to Old English, Mr. Bertola is occasionally at a loss. He points out the word "thegns" and observes that it is not in the dictionary. And it so happens that by a miracle of good fortune I am able to help him. I take down a pocket Shakespeare and show him a speech announcing that "the thane of Cawdor lives, a prosperous gentleman." Mr. Bertola seizes it with avidity.

"The same word? How simple! And what is a thane?"

"Why, see what it says," I answer, pointing: "'a prosperous gentleman.' A wealthy yeoman, a rich farmer."

Oh yes. He is relieved. And how am I getting on with my Italian? Not very fast, I admit, not having Mr. Bertola's aptitude in that direction.

"But Italian is easy," he protests, smiling.

"Possibly, but I am rather thick."

"Thick"? Out comes note-book and pencil. Thick, applied to brains, is a novel word to him, and he makes a neat note. That is his way. At lunch, which he shares with us in the messroom, he

is confounded by substantives like mulligatawny, piccalilli, and chow-chow, as indeed he is by the substances; but they go into the note-book all the same. He begs me to come to his home in the evening and he will give me a lesson in Italian. Which is very charming of him; but I know those Italian lessons. The pages of Metastasio or Pascoli lie open before us, but we talk continally, in English, of English literature. There has been nothing like it since the days of Aristophanes, he asserts, and he ought to know. He picks up a translation of "The Day's Work," and reads me the story of "The Ship that Found Herself" and says no other nation could produce anything like it. He opens a translation of "A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur" and calls it "something new in literature," a *tour de force*. He confirms my long-cherished suspicion that Fitzgerald's "Omar" is a much greater poem than the Persian original. He tells me that to study the Oriental languages he must obtain the grammars in English. He has written in English an essay on Persian literature for his diploma. And when he goes to Naples to study Chinese he proposes to write in English a thesis on Buddhism. As I sit in the little room, looking out across the roofs and domes toward the blue Mediterranean, I wonder what will be the future of this railroad conductor's son who talks with critical judgment of Dryden, Gray, and Shelley, who has read Hamlin Garland

and the plays of Rostand. I wonder, too, what will be the future of this young Italy who is knocking at our old gates, the Italy of D'Annunzio, of Pascoli and Croce, the renascent Italy of Ferranti, Rubattino, and Marconi. A young doctor comes in as we sit by the window. He is going later to Tripoli, and is taking lessons in Arabic in the meantime. His father, I am informed, was a lifelong friend of Pascoli, a fellow-professor at the University of Bologna. He speaks in a gentle voice of the great man whose poetry he seems to know almost by heart. Quite forgetting the Arabic, he repeats that strange, haunting ballad "*O Cavalla storna*," and they tell me the story of its origin. They tell me, too, tales of court intrigue that sound incredible to Western ears, tales told in a whisper, in confidence, and which lie, they say, at the back of Pascoli's somber history.

And so the days go by until the ship is discharged and we say farewell once more. Heading south, we drop our empty chianti flasks over the side and take up the orderly flow and return of watch-keeping and repose; Gibbon comes into his own again. Nick Carter is to the fore in the galley after supper. The Skipper brings down a few of his shilling novels with their striking paper covers—strong meat for strong men, indeed—and inquires if I can give him something to read. I look over the shelves in some perplexity. I know what he wants; or rather, I know

what he doesn't want. He is a tall, thin man with an expression of placid authority, the result of ten years' successful command. He regards seafaring as "a wasted life" and seeks forgetfulness of his mournful lot in tales of flaming passion and spectacular contests with fortune. It must not be supposed, however, that he is an uneducated man. He can express himself with forceful propriety upon most subjects, and his acquaintance with modern fiction, like Sam Weller's knowledge of London, is extensive and peculiar. The pity of it is that he stops at fiction. To get him to read anything else is like putting a balky horse at a fence. He is afflicted with the modern Englishman's illusion that non-fiction is uninteresting. He is ironical at the expense of novelists, too, who, according to him, hand him the same old stuff in every book he buys. Here's the hero, here the heroine, he says, setting a can of tobacco and a bottle of ink on opposite sides of my chest of drawers. Here in between (taking a mass of cigar- and cigarette-boxes, hair-brushes, and a collar or two) are the complications of the plot. The problem is to get these two together with the complications behind them.

"Gosh!" he remarks, lighting a cigar, "I could do it myself!"

I suggest he try it.

"Easy as falling off a log," he continues. Try it? Why, he did have a try—long voyage across

the Indian Ocean—nothing to do but take the sun—fine weather—got an idea. In reply to my inquiry about the idea, he smokes hard for a moment, laughs, and finally admits he didn't strike out anything very brilliant in ideas, but of course he didn't try very hard.

"There was a man—and a girl . . . in love, you know."

"A can of tobacco and an ink-bottle—yes?" I murmur.

The Skipper laughs. "Gosh! I don't believe there's anything else to write a story about," he declares, at length.

I give him "The Nigger of the Narcissus," and he goes back to his bridge-cabin, to a new experience.

We make good speed now, being in ballast, and it is only a matter of two or three days before we tie up alongside the jib-cranes and the iron-ore dumps of Goletta, which is by Tunis, with Carthage a mile or so to the northward. Here Gibbon might have a reasonable chance of holding a student, supposing we had any students in the ship's company. But for most of us the present is too fantastically unfamiliar, the blaze of colour is too insistent, for us to bother much about ruins. In the evening, when the cranes have ceased to tumble the red ironstone into the holds, and the Arab night watchman, with his big yellow dog and heavily knobbed staff, spreads his little carpet on the quay to make his two-bow

prayer, we cross the entrance to the Lake of Tunis and climb aboard the electric trolley-car that runs into the city. We wander round, looking at the shops where wealthy French tourists are purchasing curios and Moorish furniture; we peer doubtfully through the enormous gates which lead into the Arab quarter and decide that we are safer in the wide boulevards; we even discover a bookstore and pause in the hope of finding a stray English volume to read. I call the Second's attention to a cheap line of French classics, for he has sometimes incautiously owned to a knowledge of French.

"Not to read it," he parries, looking alarmed—"not to read what you call well."

So I purchase for half a franc a paper-bound edition of the "Barber of Seville" and a copy of *La Vie Parisienne*, and we go on to dine at one of the little open-air cafés near the Military Club, where there is a band playing Waldteufel and Mascagni. Here we take a table, and the proprietress, a handsome young Frenchwoman, noting new arrivals, hastens to put us at our ease with a burst of unintelligible welcome. And what is it that we wish? I hand the menu, in French and Arabic—the French handwriting being about as easy to decipher as the Arabic—to the Second, who gives me a long and menacing look before clearing his throat and attempting a selection. The proprietress looks keenly at our grinning faces, and then

at the Second, who is extremely warm and worried. He puts his finger on a line of hieroglyphics and seems to signify that we will have some of that. The proprietress utters an exclamation. I look over and note that he is asking for *plats du jour*. Ah! she comprehends. But which? We do not spick French? Then she will essay.

"See!" She points. "Feesh, rosbif, poulet, pouding, yes? Which is it? An' wine? *Vin blanc ou rouge?*" Eventually, to the great relief of the Second, who is understood to remark, *sotto voce* that he doesn't know French, "to speak it very well," we consummate an intelligible order, and Madame makes a descent upon another table.

It is a very good dinner. When one considers that the total cost per head, including wine, coffee and cognac, is three and a half francs, it is an astoundingly good dinner. The military band plays with enthusiasm, which leads one to hope that they too, have either had a similar good dinner or are trumpeting their way toward it. Officers with clanking swords and pretty women; majestically bearded old *sherifs* in wonderful robes of silk with gold needlework and turbans with precious stones; Arab women so closely veiled that the Third pauses open-mouthed with his fork raised, to stare; lemonade merchants with clinking brass cups; fezzed peanut-sellers; larky Arab newsboys; and an interminable procession of incredibly maimed and misshapen beggars—

pass before us as we sit under the awning and eat our meal. We dally with the coffee and cognac and light cigarettes, and I notice the Second stealthily loosening a button of his vest. The Third, pushing his chair back a little, looks at me with an expression in his cheerful young eyes that I imagine to mean, "Say, life's not so bad, after all." As I return his smile his face grows indistinct in the cigarette smoke, the brilliant colouring of the striped awning fades, and the clash and jingle of the music die away. Some one is shaking me, and I sit up with a start.

"Come on," says my old friend and shipmate. "They will haul the gangway in in a minute. Just one before you go. Here's luck."

We drink, and I hastily thrust back in its place the book I had taken down for a little while, a book which must have been, alas! only a Book of Dreams. . . .

And the gangway being about to be hauled in, I stepped aboard.

THE CRUSADERS

I

THE information that we go out at dusk is received by the ship's company in various ways, according to the type and degree of responsibility. Some deride it as a joke. Have we not been about to go out these last ten weeks? Some say solemnly, "Then we'll be sunk"; and add in a whisper, "and she 'll go down like a stone." They adopt an attitude of mournful pride in serving aboard a coffin-ship, whose fate is sealed as soon as she pokes her aged nose outside the breakwater. Some mutter. "Thank goodness!" for they are weary of harbour life, and desire, though they would never admit it, to see the land sink down behind the horizon. Some are sentimentally regretful, for they are in love with dark-eyed Italian *signorine*, languorous Syriennes, amiable Maltese, or brisk and stylish Greek *koritsai*, with whom they have danced in the gaunt Casino or bathed on the yellow beach below. Some are excited, for they are young and this is almost the first time they have been to sea. And others are serious, for they have responsibilities. It is a singular fact that one cannot be forehanded with an

anxiety. One may prepare unto the very last and most ultimate contingency. One may foresee all disaster, and provide barrier behind barrier of remedial devices. One may have been through a precisely identical experience for years on end—*N'importe!* Fear, born of the stern matron Responsibility, sits on one's shoulders like some heavy imp of darkness, and one is preoccupied and, possibly, cantankerous.

While I am making out the engine-room station-bill, the Chief enters and hands me a chit. It is a formal order to do something which is already done. It adds at the bottom that at 6:30 sharp we shall move out. I finish making out the bill, apportioning the weaker brethren of the stokehold to different watches, and assigning Mr. Ferguson, a junior engineer, to take watch with me. More of Mr. Ferguson anon.

I go out and take a survey of progress on deck. In the classic phrase, all is bustle and confusion. Men in khaki are moving rapidly to and fro, hauling heavy cases which contain shells, bombs, detonators, compressed-air bottles, spare parts, and stores of all kinds. Others, mounted on flimsy ladders, are busy connecting controls, filling petrol tanks, and adjusting engines, on the seaplanes which lie, like huge yellow grasshoppers with folded wings, under the awnings of the fore-deck hangar. Walking about in an extreme undress of gray flannel trousers

and petrol-splashed khaki tunics are some of the pilots and observers.

Suddenly there is a roar from one of the engines; the awnings belly and flap violently; a piece of newspaper rushes past me like a bullet, and I find myself in an almost irresistible gale of wind. A mechanic is trying out an engine. One of our cats, seated on the mine-sweeping machine, jumps off in disgust at the noise, and is immediately blown out of sight, tail in air, along the deck. We hold on. The engine dies down, surges up, dies away again, flutters, barks once with astonishing vigour, and stops. A pilot, who has been making frantic gestures to the mechanic, whose head alone is visible above the fuselage, now climbs the piano-wire ladder which leads to the seat, and converses with energy, and, let us hope, widsom. The flight-commander, an imposing creature in naval uniform, with the gold-lace rings of a lieutenant, a pair of gold wings, and a gold star on his sleeve, hurries up and speaks rapidly to his pilots.

They all light cigarettes. This, I observe, is the one indispensable factor of war—one must light a cigarette. At any given moment of the day, I will guarantee that three fourths of our ship's company are each striking one of the dubious matches supplied by our glorious Oriental ally, and are lighting cigarettes supplied by our glorious Hellenic ally. I tremble when I think of the noise

which is going on beneath the artillery fire of the Western and Eastern fronts—the noise of millions of matches being struck to ignite millions of cigarettes. I observe a youth descending from a ladder, where he has been putting tiny brass screws into a defective *aileron*, to the gangway between the plane-platform and the bulwarks. He sits down, produces a cigarette. I see the commander, who was master of a sailing ship before the flight-commander's parents were married, lighting a cigarette from the chief engineer's. I observe a signalman's face protruding from the telephone-exchange window, and I also observe a cigarette protruding from his ear. In the flap pocket of the quartermaster, now testing the steering gear, is an obvious box of cigarettes. I feel that I have eluded my destiny somehow. It has become perfectly plain to me that no man can achieve greatness in war unless he smokes cigarettes. But I digress. It is time to take a turn out of the engines.

Passing along the bridge deck, where a small army of young sailors are hoisting the motor-launches and looking extremely serious about it, I come upon a still more serious party clustered about an anti-aircraft gun. Some hold shells under their arms very much as a lady holds her Pomeranian, and tickle the fuse (which corresponds to the nose of the Pomeranian) with a wrench. Some are pushing with tremendous energy a sort of mop which is

always getting jammed half way up the bore. Others stand in readiness, breathing hard and looking round self-consciously. They are the anti-aircraft crew. I pass by, smiling internally. They are about to be blooded, all except the muscular person with the hoarse voice who lectures them on the mysteries of their craft. I know him well. I have a peculiar detestation of this particular gun, which will be comprehended when it is pointed out that the holding-down bolts are precisely three feet six inches above my pillow. Just as I doze, after a hard day below and a plentiful lunch, followed by a perfect cigar, the muscular person with the hoarse voice begins an oration upon the use in action of the ten-pounder "'Otchkiss quick-firin' gun, anti-aircraft mountin's." His voice becomes a husky growl as he indicates the various portions of the gun's anatomy to the open-mouthed youngsters. I lie below, devising a fitting eternal punishment for him and his hobnailed minions. An ammunition box is opened—slap! A shell is lifted and put in—slap two. *Click!* The breech closes. *Clock!* It opens. Then comes a thump, as someone drops one of the spanners. A scuffle of boots. Hoarse voice descanting upon "use o' judgment in estimatin' speed of objective only obtainable in actual practice on enemy machines." Hence I am no friend of this gun and her crew.

I pass on and down the ladder to the spar deck.

Here is where I live. Here is the engine room, the steering gear, the heart of the ship. Abaft of this again are more planes under high awnings. Below them is the main deck, what is called the lower or mess deck, where hammocks are slung at night and meals are eaten during the day. Farther aft is the sick bay, and below that the stokers' quarters. Below these are cold stores and ammunition rooms and cells for the unworthy, of whom, alas, even this respectable ship carries a few.

As I step into the alleyway where I live, and pass into the engine room, the steering engine, which is situated in its own little steel cottage close at hand, suddenly performs a furious staccato version of a Strauss chorus, and then stops abruptly, as if ashamed of its outburst, breathing steamily through its nostrils. The control-shaft remains motionless. Evidently the quartermaster has satisfied himself that all is well. A perspiring oiler emerges from the engine-room ladder and fusses with the glands and lubricators. I look down at the shining covers of the main-engine cylinders, and suddenly I experience an emotional change. In some mysterious fashion the load of responsibility lifts, and I become light-hearted. I feel gay and care-free. After all, I reflect brazenly, what's the odds? One has done one's utmost—let what may happen. Care killed a cat. There can be no surprises. These huge, simmering, silent engines are my friends.

With them and their like I have spent many arduous years. I have their record. I know their secrets. I have had them asunder. Their enormous proportions are our heritage from a bygone generation and I have stood in amazement before the heroic dimensions of their midmost ventricles. I reflect upon their countless voyages when I was a child; upon the men who have slaved in the heat of the East, who have slept in my bunk, who have come aboard full to the teeth, who have sung their songs and drawn their pay, and now lie, let us hope, in some quiet churchyard at home.

I reflect upon all this, I say, and I am no longer worried. For a brief spell I savour the pleasure of the seafaring life. It occurs to me that this explains in part the enigmatic affability which the great occasionally display. They have a sudden vision of life as a whole, and for one brief instant they become human, and smile. It may be so. However, I must descend from the heights of speculation into the engine room. As I reach the middle grating, I feel the undersides of the cylinders, and note that they are sufficiently hot. The thermometer hanging near the generator registers a hundred and ten. Four great ventilators send down cool jets of air, and I decide that the temperature is very comfortable. A glance at the oil-gauge and speed-meter and I descend yet farther to the starting platform.

A young man is walking to and fro in a highly superior manner, as if personally responsible for the conduct of the war, and quite equal to the occasion. He is an engine-room artificer, and assists Mr. Ferguson and myself while on watch. I inquire if everything is ready for me, and he assures me, with a whimsical smile, that he believes so. Rather nettled at this frivolous behaviour I become anxious again and put one or two pertinent queries. I try the reversing gear, which moves over with a smart click and a most gratifying hiss, and open the manœuvring-valve. The young man, whom I have lectured assiduously on this point, stands ready, and as the enormous cranks move and I shout, he reverses the gear. The cranks, with a sigh of immense boredom, move back and pause. Again we reverse and I administer a shade more steam. The cranks move again and the business is repeated—in the opinion of the young man—*ad nauseam*. At last, after many essays, the high-pressure crank is permitted to descend to the bottom of the stroke, which is six feet; it reaches the dead centre, the *point de mort*, as our allies call it, passes it, and comes up like a giant refreshed. We reverse, and it goes down again, and up, over the top, and continues to revolve in a solemn manner. *Bon!*

I make a brief excursion round to the back, where a number of auxiliary engines are busily engaged about their own particular businesses. I note that

the main feed-pumps, the auxiliary feed-pump, the circulating pumps, the bilge-pump, the sanitary-pump, the fresh-water pump, are all working well, glance at one or two gauges, and hasten back to the manœuvring-valve. We reverse and go ahead for a few revolutions. We stop. The young man, who is not so foolish as he looks, presses a button and speaks into a tube marked "Chief Engineer." What he says I cannot hear, but I know perfectly well that the Chief in his cabin is grinning.

The young man is somewhat of a joke. He affects a felicitous blend of a doctor's "bedside man ner" and the suave courtesy of a department-store floorwalker. This, in an engine room, is provocative of mirth. Mr. Ferguson, who is already overdue, guffaws with rollicking abandon when Mr. de Courcy emits one of his refined and ladylike remarks. If Mr. de Courcy has the smoothness of oil—lubricating oil—Mr. Ferguson has the harsh detergence of water—strong water. However, as I make a hasty pilgrimage into the stokehold and discover four stokers and a coal-passer enjoying a can of tea, it occurs to me that if Mr. Ferguson doesn't appear soon, it will be necessary to take steps.

II

I COME back to the engine room, to find Mr. Ferguson descending the engine-room ladder, in a white singlet, khaki short pants, striped socks with red

suspenders, and tennis shoes. The inevitable cigarette is in his mouth, and his cap, the white cover of which is stained a chrome yellow with oil-splashes, is over one eye in a negligent and rakish manner. He is a tall strong figure of thirty-odd, his face freckled, his nose twisted, his hair of an Irish flame-red. His voice is stupendously frank and genial, and he disarms criticism with the wealth of his confessions. He is one of the world's unfortunates, he will inform you gaily. (You are bound to meet him.)

Just now he is making a specialty of courts-martial. He is continually being court-martialled. He belongs to an obscure and elusive subdivision of the Navy known as the M. F. A., which is, being interpreted, Merchant Fleet Auxiliary, though Mr. Ferguson asserts with racial satire that the initials stand for Merely Fooling Around. This indicates one of his main difficulties, which is to realize that he is subject to naval discipline. It is to him an intolerable state of affairs, when he becomes pleasantly jingled ashore in Arab-town, and flings a wine bottle at a native, that he should be apprehended by a silent and formidable *posse* of blue-jackets with hangers at their sides and police brassards on their arms. It is still more intolerable when, after joyously beating up said *posse* and being carried by main force to the cells in the barracks, he is informed by typed letter that, having been

guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer, he will be tried by court-martial on such-and-such a date. He seems unable to comprehend the sudden change in the attitude of the naval authorities. Only a few weeks previously he had been one of the crew of a trawler which had, more by luck than cunning, caught an enemy submarine recharging her depleted batteries, and methodically pounded her to pieces until she filled and sank. Mr. Ferguson's part in the drama was to stand on the bottom rung of his little engine-room ladder, with his head just above the scuttle, and remark after each salvo, with keen enjoyment, "Good again! Hit her up, boys!" for which he duly received in cold cash five hundred dollars of prize-money. Mr. Ferguson's interviews with sums over a hundred dollars have been fleeting, shadowy episodes of coruscating and evanescent brilliancy. It was even so on this occasion. The native world that hives and swarms adown the narrow and filth-cluttered alleys of Arab-town profited vastly at Mr. Ferguson's expense. He was regal in his largess. His method of flinging money abroad and kicking the recipients appealed to their Oriental instincts. In two days he had cleaned up the town, from *can-can* dances to hashish parties in the disused mosque behind the wall of the Jewish cemetery; and he was sampling for the third time the exquisite transmigrations which befall the soul when steeped in Turkish gin, as the *posse* already men-

tioned broke into Ali Ben Farag's Constantinople Divan for Officers Only, and bore him back to barracks under the quiet eyes of the Syrian stars.

The fact is, Mr. Ferguson is temperamentally averse to discipline. He is one of those to whom the war is of no moment whatever. His patriotism is more a postulated abstraction than a glowing inspiration. He is one of those rootless organisms which float hither and yon over the world, indigenous nowhere, at home everywhere. They fall into no categories of wisdom or virtue, for they have the active yet passionless inconclusiveness of intelligent lower animals. They bear no malice and suffer no regret. They leave a memory without making a name. They resolve their personal belongings to the irreducible minimum of a battered and padlocked sea-bag. Their cabins contain neither curios nor conveniences, neither photographs nor tokens of feminine affection. They have a far look in their pale eyes, and one wonders what distant and delightful haven they are already visualizing. For them there is no continuing city. They must on—on! pressing forward in blind ardour toward a retreating paradise whence, even were they to arrive, they would immediately prepare to depart. They are the true romantics of our age. Grimy, dissolute, and incompetent, they pass gaily through our orderly and disciplined crowds of unimaginative realists

who do the work of the world, and brush off upon us stray threads of golden fancy, fallen from the clouds of tarnished glory which they trail behind them.

Having reached the starting platform, Mr. Ferguson halts and collects his apparently scattered faculties. Although under what is known in the Navy as "open arrest," he has contrived to get ashore by means of one of those preposterous yet plausible excuses which only the romantic can devise. He is now in the no-man's land between intoxication and sobriety, and stands with his tennis shoes wide apart, the muscles of his legs distending the scarlet straps of his garters, and his stony stare fixed upon Mr. de Courcy, who patrols the platform in front of the engines.

No man can gaze for long upon Mr. de Courcy's refined and genteel physiognomy without perceiving the fundamental absurdity of the universe. Mr. de Courcy is a gentleman of good family who, by some mysterious dispensation, evaded the normal destiny of his type; for, instead of entering him for holy orders, his family, who I understand are "county," shipped him to a Central American oil field, where for some years he occupied an obscure position on the engine-room staff. My own impression is that he would be better in the Church, in business, in the House of Lords, in the Army—anywhere save in a ship's engine room. He has the ineradica-

ble predisposition of his class to treat the actual performance of a job of work as derogatory to his dignity. He assures me that in the Navy, by which he means regular men-of-war, he was not required to do the unpleasant things that I regard as his daily portion. His delicately chiselled features flush faintly behind the veil of cigarette smoke as he regrets the violence of my language and the wild impropriety of my metaphors. Nothing, however, can ruffle the eternal and hereditary conviction in which he reposes, that he and his like are of finer clay, that race and gentility are adequate substitutes for achievement.

Whether Mr. Ferguson focuses the precise and piquant differences between himself and Mr. de Courcy it would be difficult to discover; but as he gazes, the stony stare softens, the drawn lines of his reddish freckled face crinkle into laughter, and the bony ridge of his twisted nose glistens humorously. He is finding himself. None of the stimulants of Western civilization has much power over Mr. Ferguson. They only dim his brightness for a brief period, and not even the most corrosive of cocktails can permanently affect the hard lustre of his inconsequent optimism. With a short laugh, like a dog's bark, he swings past me and dives round behind the engines, and, lifting a movable plate in the platform, investigates hurriedly among divers cocks and valves, as if he had suddenly remembered a

buried treasure, and was reassuring himself as to its exact whereabouts.

III

IN THE meantime we are standing by. From above comes the blast of the first lieutenant's whistle, as he presides over the doings of his minions. It is, for all the lateness of the season, intensely hot. The armies in Palestine report a heat-wave of unparalleled length and temperature. And even here, with a breeze blowing in from the Mediterranean, the thermometer remains at 90 degrees all day, and our rooms are like ovens until the small hours.

Mr. de Courcy goes into the stoke-hold, to get a breath of fresh air. The oiler slowly descends from above and moves in and out among the engines on the middle grating, filling lubricators, adjusting siphon-wicks and pausing for a well-earned spell under the after ventilator. As I make a gesture indicating the astern guide-bars he replies with a slight raising of his left hand (with a cigarette in the fingers), which may be interpreted somewhat on these lines: "Have no fear. I have attended to the lubrication of the astern guides, and am not likely, at my time of life, to neglect so trifling a precaution. Rest easy. I was doing this when you were a boy."

What mystifies me about all these men of mine is the new lease of life they have taken since the orders for steam came. They take a fresh interest

in everything. They had become slack, lackadaisical, and preoccupied with ridiculous grievances. They went ashore and brought back tales of all disasters told them by the motley-clad survivors of torpedoed ships. They muttered openly in my hearing that they desired to be shifted to a ship that went to sea. And now, so far are they from appreciating the heroic, that their attitude by no means resembles the gladiators of old, with their lugubrious "Hail, Cæsar! we who are about to die salute thee." Nothing is farther from their thoughts than dying, though two submarines broke into our sweepers four miles outside last night and sank three of them. Their attitude is much better rendered as "Hail, Caesar! we who are about to get busy salute thee." They come down on the stroke of eight bells, watch after watch, and pursue the even tenor of their ways, cigarette in mouth and oil can or shovel in hand, and seem never to visualize the oncoming destruction that may be ripping through the dark water outside. Pooh! Such anticipations are foreign to their nature, which seems to have been toughened into an admirable closeness of texture by the frightful climate of their native islands and the indurating labour of the sea.

So we pause, waiting at our allotted stations for the orders, which come at last with a clash and jingle of gongs; the telegraph-pointer swings to and fro and comes to rest at "Stand by." Mr. de Courcy

immediately replies with an elegant manipulation of the handle, and records the time or a little blackboard at his elbow. The Chief, a tall, lank young man in a soiled white uniform, ripples half way down the upper ladder and catches my eye, raising his eyebrows the while. I nod, and he makes a slow circular gesture. I nod again. I ask Mr. Ferguson if he is ready. He straightens up where he stands by the main feed-pumps, waves his hand with a magnificent air, and says "Let her go, Gallagher!"

Assisted by Mr. de Courcy, I let her go. The immense limbs of the triple-expansion engines flourish back and forth, and come to rest as I close the manœuvring-valve. Mr. Ferguson prances to and fro in front of the pumps, starting-lever in hand, his head twisted round to observe the behaviour of the automatic control. He lays the lever over his shoulder like a weapon, and in the dim twilight he reminds me, with his bare white calves crossed by the scarlet garter-straps, of some Roman legionary on guard. Faithful unto——

But Mr. Ferguson would deprecate the suggestion. He had never been faithful unto anything. Loyalty is not his *métier*. His digressions from the path of righteousness usually provide him with a free pass to the great outdoors, the wide free world in which he is a joyous and insolvent pilgrim. He is puzzled at this novel attitude of the Navy, which, instead of firing him without a reference, oppresses him with

typed forms and a periodical court-martial, which sentences him to be "dismissed his ship." He will never realize that to those who are brought up within the charmed circle of the officer-class, such a sentence is tantamount to a death warrant. Heh! Give him his pay and he'll quit. Yes, sir! He didn't know he was marrying the darned business. What's eating them anyway? There's a war on? Nobody'd think it, to hear those popinjays talk about conduct unbecoming an officer. Huh! It's a dog's life, sure.

Now the fact is that when, hereafter, you meet Mr. Ferguson, shaking the dust of the Nevada copper mines from his feet in disgust, or hustling about the levees at New Orleans in search of a job as an oiler, or lounging on the water-front at Port Limon, waiting for a chance to stow away on a fruiter, he will speak of his life in the British Navy, with a break in his voice and his pale eyes full of happy tears. Ah, those were the days! he will tell you. A man was treated *as* a man there. And so on.

This is the mark of the true romantic. It must be a fascinating existence. One feels a perfect Pecksniff in the presence of beings whose imaginations are for ever ahead of their experience. They are but strangers here: heaven is their home. One has the impression, while driving them to their appointed tasks amid the humid heat and noisy chaffering of an engine room, of employing shackled

angels whose wings have been clipped close and who have had their tail-feathers pulled out. And they certainly regard one as a demon with an inexplicable passion for toil, a creature without vision and without hope beyond the immediate accomplishment of senseless labour, a slave-driver owing allegiance to a secret and sinister authority which they generally call Capitalism.

Mr. Ferguson is eloquent on the subject of capitalists. This, he assures me, is a capitalists' war. Look, he cries, at the poor simps being butchered in France, all to fill the capitalists' bags with gold! Even their own children have to go. Nothing is sacred to a capitalist save his "bags of gold." It is the mark of the true romantic to be preoccupied with symbols, and Mr. Ferguson is partial to the gorgeous imagery of modern anarchism.

However, it must not be assumed that Mr. Ferguson and I are deadly enemies because of the incompatibility of our ideals. He is graciously pleased to overlook what he calls my funny ideas, and rewards me with thumbnail sketches of episodes in his career. It was so on this occasion as we sailed out to join the squadron off Askalon. Mr. de Courcy having gone up to get his supper, and the telegraph having rung "full ahead," Mr. Ferguson fell into a vein of reminiscence, and told me tales of "the happy days that are no more." With one eye on the revolution telegraph and the other on

the steam- and air-gauges, I listen to his Odyssey. For there is a streak of poetry in him, as I have endeavoured to adumbrate. All unconsciously, and with a far look in his pale blue eyes, he beholds a picture. From the hell of the Present he sees a happy Past and a heavenly Future. He can communicate atmosphere, and when he remarks that once, in Liverpool, it came over him that he ought to settle down and be respectable, I am alert at once. I could see it "coming over him"—the footsore, jaded wanderer treading the bright dirty streets; the smart pretty landlady's daughter leading him by swift short stages to see how desirable was a small house at Sefton Park or Garston; the patient search for employment, ending in a job on the shore-gang of the White Star Line. For a fortnight all went well. He was thinking of getting engaged.

To my disappointment, he slides all too easily from this momentous and interesting subject to a whimsical description of his adventures on the mammoth liners on which he was employed. He tells how, while working in the low-pressure valve-chest of the *Gigantic*'s port engine, he slipped and fell through the exhaust-pipe into the main condenser. He pictures the consternation of his helper, who had gone for a tool, when he found his mate vanished; the efforts to locate his muffled shouts; the tappings of hammers, the footsteps, the hoarse murmurs broken by an occasional "Hi! where are yer, mate?"

and his replies, stifled by his own laughter. It is perfectly plain that this sort of thing was more to Mr. Ferguson's taste than humdrum industry. When he was finally fished out at the end of a coil of rope, the leading hand threatened him with dismissal if it occurred again; for the leading hand was not romantic, only a soul besotted with efficiency.

And on the *Oceanic* again these two fell foul of each other, for Mr. Ferguson lost his way on the boiler-tops. He asserts that there were hundreds of boilers on that ship, all alike, and thousands of ladders. He grew fascinated with the problem as he groped up and down, through cross-bunkers, in and out of fan-rooms, for ever encountering fresh boilers, but never the one where he had been working. But the third time that leading hand found him far from his job he became explosive and personal, led Mr. Ferguson firmly by the arm through interminable corridors, until his boiler stood dimly revealed through a manhole, and informed him that it was his last chance. Mr. Ferguson grew resentful. As if he could help it! Silly, he calls it, to get in a rage over a little thing like that. However, that's the sort of man he was. Only got himself disliked. And just out of petty spite, he orders him, Mr. Ferguson to wit, to work all night overtime on a rush job.

Mr. Ferguson has strong views on night work, as I can testify. He imagines the capitalists ought to

be satisfied when they have spoiled a man's day, without gouging into the hours of rest. Hurrying to his lodgings, he had his tea, and the landlady's daughter made him up a packet of sandwiches and a can of cocoa, to be warmed on a steampipe when he needed it. You can see them there, slogging away through the night, stripping an auxiliary engine and erecting the new one, pausing about midnight for a snack and a smoke. And while the engineer on watch is having forty winks, one of the gang becomes confidential with Mr. Ferguson and reveals a discovery. One of the storerooms where electrical gear is kept has been left open. And he knows a scrap-metal merchant who—— and so on.

Mr. Ferguson becomes vague just here. Well, I know how it is, he suggests. One thing leads to another. You can easily pack a lot of sheet rubber round you and nobody be any the wiser. Nobody was, apparently, until a day or so later. Mr. Ferguson arrived home for a late supper, having been standing treat to the boys after a boxing tournament, when Maggie—that was his girl, you see—met him at the door with wide serious eyes. Two men had called to see him, she said, and she *knew* one of them was a detective—she'd seen him before when she'd been to the station about having had her pocket picked. What *had* he done?

Well, by now, Mr. Ferguson knew well enough what he had done, and it is not in the nature of

true romantics to deny anything. With Maggie's eyes searching his face and Maggie's hands clutching his coat, he backed against the little near-mahogany hall stand and admitted that it might be awkward if they came back again, as they would when they couldn't find him elsewhere. They stood there, those two—the girl in an agony of sorrow and fear, with a maternal desire to shield the big silly, he devising some way of quitting. And as they stood there, they heard footsteps at the end of the silent street. Mr. Ferguson must have stiffened. He says, in his Celtic way, that he felt his hair move. Maggie stuck his cap on and dragged him through the kitchen into the scullery. She opened the door softly, pushed him out, and followed him into the tiny yard. Quick, over the wall at the bottom, into the next garden! The house is empty; go through and out of the front door into the side street. Run! Yes, write and she'd tell him—— run! And she darted into the house to face the future alone.

Mr. Ferguson followed her instructions. I am convinced that he enjoyed himself immensely that evening. He dropped over the wall and put his foot through a cucumber-frame, it is true, but the light crash and jingle only set off two cats at frantic speed. He also fell over something in the hall of the empty house and skinned his knuckles. He says he has often wondered what it was. Once in the quiet suburban street, with two lovers saying

good-night under a lamp-post far down on the other side, he walked unobtrusively away. It was characteristic of him that he didn't write, and therefore never heard any more of the affair. He rode on a trolley car away out into the suburbs of Liverpool, and then took a train a little way farther. It was autumn, and he began to walk through England.

We are interrupted by a youthful sailor, who comes down with a chit from the bridge, a chit which informs me that, having joined the other vessels of the squadron, we are ordered to proceed at ten knots, and the commander will appreciate it if we can maintain the revolutions at fifty, so as to keep station. Mr. Ferguson laughs satirically, and says the old feller ought to boil his head. This after the youthful sailor has gone up again. I agree that a ship forty years old is a problem when it comes to "keeping station." "There you are!" says Mr. Ferguson, and conceives his animus against all constituted authority to be only too well founded. "And here comes Pinhead Percy," he mutters, as Mr. de Courcy descends, a gold-tipped cigarette in his lips, and with an engaging smile. Leaving him to carry on, we go up to dinner.

IV

It is a quarter to four next morning when the ward-room steward on night duty brings me a cup of tea and a bloater-paste sandwich.

"Anything doing?" I inquire, rolling over to reach the cup.

He murmurs that he thinks we're going half speed and the airmen are all dressing.

"See anything yet?"

"Oh, yes, you can see artillery at it ashore," he observes casually.

I sit up. It has not been my lot to behold artillery at it ashore, so I swallow the tea, dress hurriedly, and go out on deck. It is still dark, but away to starboard hangs a peculiar faint glow. At intervals this glow brightens and quivers, and the brightening and quivering is followed by a sound like the distant closing of a heavy door. Ahead and astern of us are ships keeping station, black blots in the indeterminate mingling of sky and sea. At intervals one can make out smaller blots moving restlessly hither and yon, passing and repassing, turning and gliding with silent and enigmatic persistence toward unknown goals.

I yawn, conclude that these small craft are saving us the fatigue of zigzagging, and go below. Mr. Ferguson is descending the ladder just in front of me. Mr. de Courcy, a slender wraith in white overalls, appears at the other door of the engine room, and follows. Eight faint strokes sound on the bell-bar below, very faint, out of consideration for enemy underwater craft who may be, and in fact are, listening in tense vigilance not far away. It is four o'clock.

The engineer going off watch hands me a chit from the Chief to the effect that the planes will be launched at daybreak, when I am to call him. Good enough! We carry on, and presently the revolution-gongs begin to clatter, now more, now less, and through the skylight one can see the sky beginning to lighten.

Mr. Ferguson lounges to and fro, as I stand by the manœuvring-valve, and whistles "I wanter go back, I wanter go back, to the place where I was born." It occurs to me that this is an engaging fiction. I doubt very much if he would care to bo back there—somewhere on the western edge of Ulster. He once said his adventures might go into a book. What he ought to have said was that his adventures might have come out of a book; for, though he is communicative, he says very little about himself. It is the adventure which interests him, not the biography of the adventurer. He has the happy love of *incognito* which is the mark of your true romantic. It happened to him, certainly. Well, it was this way—— And off he goes.

Off he went as I inquired where he walked when he started away through England. Well, his boots wore out first, being his thin patents, and he bought a pair of heavy country shoes, with soles all hobnails and great horseshoe-shaped flangings on the heels. Once he had suppled them, they were fine walking-gear. And he went on into Yorkshire and down through Lincolnshire, doing a job of work here and a chore or

two there for the country-folk, and marvelling how empty England seemed. Almost as empty as the sea, he remarks. But of course he was taking a line that took him past the big cities. He slept in sheds and under hay-ricks.

Once he strolled into the huge garage of a hunting-hotel in Leicestershire, and got into a palatial limousine in a far corner, and slept like a duke. Note the metaphor. Your true romantic preserves the faith in fairyland, for all his gross ineptitudes and tawdry sociological taradiddles. Mr. Ferguson slept like a duke. Don't imagine, however, that he is ignorant of dukes. He knows more of them than either you or I, who have never seen one, and who are unfamiliar with the habits of the species.

Mr. Ferguson has told me the pathetic story of his efforts to make a fresh start in life when he had exhausted the resources and the patience of his native hamlet. As usual, he was vague at points, but I imagine it was the old poaching business that induced the irate Bench to lock him up. And when he emerged, a pale, lathy emblem of repentance, it was decreed by an outraged parent that he should emigrate to England, said parent having a brother who was a locomotive-driver on a branch line. The idea was to interest Master Ferguson in locomotives, and in the sylvan loveliness of East Anglia set his feet in the paths of virtue.

So it fell out, and Mr. Ferguson found himself

cleaning freight engines in a barn at the end of a branch line. It was a branch on a branch—almost a twig line in fact, he implies, whimsically. It seems that his uncle was a driver distinguished far above other drivers, inasmuch as he hauled the train which was appointed to stop on occasion at the duke's private station on the twig line. And the duke in question often availed himself of the well-known eccentricity of the ducal classes by riding on the foot-plate instead of in his reserved compartment. This sounds far-fetched, no doubt, to democrats, but it is quite credible. Dukes have more sense than many people give them credit for. Possibly, too, this particular duke was a true romantic himself, and was only realizing in his maturity what every boy desires —to ride on the foot-plate. And hence it turned out that Mr. Ferguson found himself in possession of a relative who knew a duke.

The pity of it was that Mr. Ferguson could not be induced to display any particular aptitude or mark of genius which would justify any one in bringing him to the notice of the family liege lord.

One gets a glimpse of feudal England while listening to Mr. Ferguson's account of that happy valley, with its twig line of railway, rabbits and hares and pheasants visible on the single track during the long hours between the twig trains, the vast ducal seat showing its high turrets and gold-leaf window-frames among the ancestral trees, the little village,

snuggled along the ducal fence, owned lock, stock, and barrel by the romantic foot-plate rider, and wrapped in immemorial quiet. All except Mr. Ferguson. He was lively when he was young, he admits, and apt to be a bit wild. A game-keeper spoke with unwonted feeling to the uncle one evening at the Cow Roast Inn on the subject of slaying game birds with stones. Mr. Ferguson, attacked by *ennui*, had sauntered down the track one day and done this frightful deed, visible to an indignant game-keeper concealed in a neighbouring copse. A lad with an eye good enough to hit a bird with a stone at thirty yards or so ought to be playing county cricket or serving in the Army, he observed, wiping his mouth.

His lordship wasn't as stern as he might be on the subject of preserving. Indeed, I have a notion, born of Mr. Ferguson's fugitive hints, that this particular lordship had certain rudimentary views on the importance of preserving other things besides game—humanity, for instance, and kindliness and Christian charity and a sense of humour. Anyhow, when the incident came to his ears, he expressed a desire to do something for the youth beyond sending him to jail. Riding up the twig line on the foot-plate to join the express for London, he ordered his henchman to bring the guilty nephew before him for interrogation. So it was done, and one day Mr. Ferguson, a gawky hobbledehoy with wild red hair standing every which-way on his turbulent head, was ushered into

one of the vast chambers of the ducal mansion—ushered in and left alone. His acute misery was rendered almost unendurable by the fact that an expanse of shimmering parquetry separated him from the nearest chair. For a moment he had a wild notion of crossing this precarious floor on his hands and knees. For yet another moment he thought of flight. Even the marble steps up which he had ascended from the side entrance was preferable to this dark shining mirror in which he could see the room upside down and his own scared face.

And then a door opened on the other side of the room, and a majestic butler appeared, followed by His Grace himself in a smoking-jacket of peacock-blue silk with old-gold frogs and piping. The butler beckoned sternly The duke, going to a desk in the corner and sitting down, beckoned amiably. The perspiration broke from Mr. Ferguson's scalp, and the tickling of his hair nearly drove him distracted. He essayed a step, quailed, and drew back to the friendly bear-skin. The majestic butler made an imperious gesture that brooked no delay. The duke looked round in innocent surprise. Mr. Ferguson, clutching at his cap, flaming in hair and visage, and nursing in his heart a new-born hatred of the governing classes and their insane luxury, started hastily across the glassy surface, slipped, recovered by a miracle that left a deep scratch and a heel-dent on the floor, wavered, stumbled, deployed

sideways, and finally, in one last desperate grasp at equilibrium, threw himself backward, whereupon his heels both shot forward from under him, he fell with a terrible thud full length, and lay still, waiting with closed eyes for death.

But of course the days when he would have been taken out and beheaded were long gone by. Life is more complicated now. The majestic seneschal, instead of clapping his hands and summoning men-at-arms to remove the clumsy varlet, rushed forward and assisted the unfortunate to his feet, looking horror-stricken at the scratches, and supporting him to the small but priceless Armenian carpet where sat the duke, at his desk, laughing heartily.

A good sort of duke I surmise; but Mr. Ferguson will not admit it. He hates the whole race of "popinjays," as he calls them. Even the beneficence which followed—a complete colonial kit and fifty pounds to start life in the great Northwest—does not soften his asperity. He thinks as little of the great Northwest as of the House of Lords or the Royal Navy. It was the beginning of his odyssey, at all events. How he sold his colonial kit in Manitoba and got a job as a bartender, and later a job as a trolley driver, and later a job as something else, cannot be set out at length. Mr. Ferguson may some day amplify his tantalizing allusions. I hope to learn more of his matrimonial adventures in the Argentine.

In the meantime I must return to the tale he told me as we worked the engines to and fro, and the ship worked in close to the shore of the Holy Land, off Askalon, and the monitors and cruisers took up their positions around us, and the planes were swung out and soared away over the enemy's lines round Gaza. It was a long hot day for all of us; longer and hotter for the Turks, I fancy, for our guns broke their great stone bridges and blew up their dumps, and destroyed their batteries, and they fell back and back and back until they had lost horse, foot, and guns, and tortured Syria was free from them for ever.

Mr. Ferguson and I have to take a good deal of this for granted. We hear the thunder of the capstans and the shouting, but in our breasts flames no martial ardour. We are preoccupied with certain defects in our ancient engines, and fill up the intervals with an idle tale.

V

Sleeping like a duke in a palatial limousine and like a tramp under a hedge, after the fashion of the true romantics, Mr. Ferguson fared southward. It was a pleasant life withal, he observes, and he marvels that, as it is so easy, so few, comparatively speaking, adopt it. Perhaps for the same reason that he abandoned it, which was that he came to a town, and was lured once more into industry, unable to escape the wage-system, as he calls it, and then was blown by the

winds of fortune out to sea once more. It must not be supposed that he is opposed *in toto* to the economic principle of wages. Indeed, one of his most attractive theories is that every man ought to have enough to live on without doing very much for it. "Twelve to one and an hour for lunch," as he phrases it in his picturesque way. Nor did he, as I have noted, object to an occasional diversion as a wage-slave, providing always that he could, at a moment's notice, move on. It was when the industrial octopus reached out its steel tentacles and began feeling for his free wild spirit, to hold it forever, that he began to squirm and wriggle. Would have squirmed and wriggled in vain, probably, but for a fantastic dénouement, as you shall see.

As he talks, we become aware of events taking place outside. Mr. de Courcy, who has been up to call the Chief, reports our planes over the lines and Turkish machines making for us as we lie on the motionless blue water under the blazing forenoon sun. And presently, as we stand by, engines moving dead slow, destroyers and motor boats rushing in swift interweaving circles about us, a terrific concussion makes our old ship quiver to her iron keel, and the lights dance, and the boiler-casing trembles visibly, shaking a cloud of soot from the skirting and making us sneeze. A moment, and another tremendous explosion follows. Our planes are sending back the range, and the next ship, a monitor with fourteen-

inch guns, is sending her shells eight miles inland upon the bridges over which the enemy must retreat. At intervals six-inch guns from British cruisers and ten-inch guns on French ships join in the game, and a continuous fog of soot is maintained in my clean engine room.

Mr. Ferguson is not concerned very much with this. Your true romantic has but small interest in the domestic virtues, and he considers that I worry unnecessarily about dirt in the engine room. With a passing sneer at capitalists, he deprecates worrying about anything; quotes a song which is very popular just now, and which clinches his argument neatly enough, and permits him to resume.

For as he wandered here and there through England, it so chanced that he came upon a quiet valley through which ran a little river and a little railway very much like the twig line, reminding him of it and leading him to digress into that episode of the duke and the dead-beat, which I have already narrated. And standing at the head of this valley, some little way from the hamlet, was a factory of sorts, with a red-brick smokestack sending out a lazy dark-blue trail of smoke to mingle with the pale-blue mist of an autumn evening.

Mr. Ferguson marvelled afresh at this anomalous affair, for the country was rural and for miles he had plodded among the fair fields of the "nook-shotten Isle of Albion." He was unfamiliar with southern

and midland England, where you may come suddenly upon a boiler shop or a dynamo factory far from the coal and iron fields, where flowers grow along the foundry wall and the manager sits by a window screened with geraniums.

It was some such place as this Mr. Ferguson had found when he realized that he had no money and it was necessary, at any rate, to truckle to capitalists long enough to earn the price of a meal. Standing on the bridge over the little river, he decided to "see how the land lay up there." Quite apart from his bodily needs, he had the true romantic curiosity to know what they manufactured in this idyllic corner of an empty land. Indeed, that was his first question to the anxious-eyed foreman whom he found in deep converse with a manager on the gravel path outside an office covered with honeysuckle. They turned upon him and sized him up; asked him what he wanted to know for. What could he do? Did he want a job? Had he ever worked a lathe? Could he work a big one?

Almost before he realized it, these supposedly sleepy denizens of a forgotten fairyland had pushed him along the flower beds, through big sliding doors, past a trumpeting steam hammer and a tempestuous rotary blower, into a machine shop whose farther end was chiefly occupied by a face lathe to which was bolted an immense fly-wheel. And all those other machines, Mr. Ferguson assures me, were

manned by boys from school, who leaned over their slide-rests and regarded the dusty way-worn newcomer with pop-eyed interest. The manager and the foreman deployed on either side of their captive, and besought him to turn to and finish the fly-wheel, which was a rush job for a factory fifty miles away, and their only experienced machinist was ill in bed with pneumonia.

Mr. Ferguson was intrigued. It was a dream, he imagined. Never in all his varied experience of a world darkened by capitalists had he ever heard the like of this: a capitalists' minion imploring a toiler to toil, offering him a bonus if finished in three days, and time-and-a-half overtime for night work. He started to remove his coat, for the fever of action was infectious, and the foreman almost tore it from his back. Remarking that it was "a week's work, in a general way," he found himself examining the rim, which was still rough, and sorting out the tools. Evidently regarding him as an angel sent from heaven to assist them in their extremity, foreman and manager backed away and watched him with shining eyes. And Mr. Ferguson, for once blinded to the madness of his action in trusting himself to the tender mercies of a hated industrialism, turned to.

And he worked. As Mr. de Courcy comes down and reports that enemy planes are overhead, and the telegraph gong rings sharply "Full ahead," and our twelve-pounder anti-aircraft guns explode with

full-throated bangs that astonish us with their unaccustomed anger, Mr. Ferguson assures me that he worked like a galley slave. He ignores Mr. de Courcy's delicate insinuation that the enemy is trying to sink us with bombs, and inquires passionately if I have ever turned a fourteen-foot fly-wheel in an old lathe. I never have, and he commands me never to try, especially if the lathe is too small and I am inexperienced at turning compound castings.

Our three guns, keeping up a deafening fusillade of twelve-pounder shells into the blue sky, overpower even the fourteen-inch monsters on the next ship. We go "Full ahead" for a few minutes, the steering-engine clattering like a mad thing as the helm is put to and fro. Mr. Ferguson resigns the telegraph to Mr. de Courcy and comes over to where I stand at the manœuvring-valve. There is a smile on his reddish, freckled features, and the ridge of his twisted nose glistens in the swift, glancing reflections of the shining rods.

"Pneumonia!" he whispers, with a far look in his eyes. That old machine was enough to give a man heart disease and brain fever, let alone pneumonia. More than once, just as he was finishing a cut, the wheel suddenly appeared out of true, and he had to invoke the aid of the boys from school and hydraulic jacks from the store and a partially demented foreman from his office, who was in terror lest he, Mr. Ferguson, should throw up the billet. Mr. Fergu-

son was assured that, if he liked, he could have permanent employment there, if he only made out successfully.

Mr. Ferguson snorts at this. Imagine the fatuous idiocy of offering *him* a permanency, the one thing from which he eternally flies! And so he goes on hour after hour, struggling with the old machine, with the bubbly casting, with his own inexperience, with the greasy belts and poorly tempered tools. For this was in the old days, when much good work was done on worn-out machinery, when precision instruments were looked at askance, and a man had to have a certain dexterity of touch and experience of eye to evolve accuracy out of the rough material of a country shop. Mr. Ferguson has a great contempt for those old days in the abstract, though he forgives them because of their romantic distance from him.

But at length it came to pass, on the third evening, that he seemed about to achieve success, all that remained to be done to the outer rim being a finishing cut to give a fine smooth surface that would assume in time the silvery polish proper to well-bred flywheels. That was at tea-time, and when he returned from the cottage where an old woman was providing him with his meals and a bed for his scanty hours of sleep, he found the works deserted, save for the elderly engine-man who was to keep the shafting going during the night. It was understood that Mr. Ferguson

was to keep at it for this last night until he had completely finished, so that the wheel might be slotted and shipped off first thing in the morning. A big naphtha flare hissing over his head, Mr. Ferguson leaned negligently on the narrow bench that ran along the wall behind him, and watched the tool gnawing softly at the slowly revolving wheel. What a life! he was thinking. The life of a cog in a wheel, a deadly dull round of grinding toil, for a mere "beggarly pittance"—which is another of Mr. Ferguson's favourite phrases. Ninepence an hour, forsooth! And heaven only knows what this little sawed-off firm would make out of the transaction—hundreds of pounds, very likely. It was true that they had magnanimously advanced him three pounds on account, two of which reposed in his jeans at the moment; but that was only the devilish cunning of the capitalist class, to hold him in their clutches a little longer.

However, it would soon be over. In the morning, after a good sleep at old Mrs. Thingummy's, he would step out once more and seek fresh woods and pastures new.

What was that? He opened his eyes and noted that his much-vaunted finishing cut had revealed yet another blow-hole in the rim of the wheel—a big one too, darn it! Well, that was the capitalists' look out. With folded arms he watched the blunt-nosed tool gnawing softly away at the gray powdery surface

and then relapsed into gloomy introspection. He was bored. He was also tired. And when a man is both bored and tired, he tends to relinquish his hold upon the realities. The shop was full of mysterious shadows and pale glimmers as the belts flapped in listless agitation on the idler-pulleys. At the far end a wheel squeaked, and he could hear the leisurely rumble and cough of the steam-engine in its corrugated house outside. Life? It was a living grave, cooped up here in a sort of iron mortuary, an imprisoned spirit toiling in the service of a sinister genie. *Bump* again! That blow-hole must be quite a big affair. It would need another cut to clean it out of the wheel. More work. More ninepences. More truckling to the mercenary spirit of the age.

But the soft murmur of the lathe was very soothing, and in spite of his bitterness of spirit, Mr. Ferguson grew drowsy. His head nodded over his folded arms. He grew more than drowsy. He slept.

Mr. Ferguson does not know how long or how often he slept and awakened. He remembers vaguely that time and again he did something or other to the slide-rest, or perhaps adjusted the tool for another cut. It must have been past two in the morning anyway, when the grand catastrophe overtook him, for soon after came daylight in the little wood where he slept till noon. But as he stood there, nodding over his folded arms, he became aware of a great noise

in his ears and a stertorous rumble of disintegrating material; and straightening up, he was horrified at what he thought at first was a nightmare woven out of his long toil and trouble. There was a spatter of sparks from the tool as it broke and flew asunder, and the whole fourteen-foot wheel was caught on the rest and was rising, rising, like some dreadful destiny, and hovering over him.

He stood in an ecstasy of expectation, petrified with an unearthly desire to know what would happen next. It rose and rose until balanced above him, pausing while the last holding bolt was sheared from the face-plate and fell into the heap of turnings below. And then, in a sublime epicycloidal curve, it descended, crashed lightly through the brick wall behind the bench, smothering him in broken mortar and plaster-dust, trundled leisurely across the yard, and striking a prostrate cement-grinder that lay upended awaiting repair, fell with a hollow boom among the débris.

Mr. Ferguson reached for his coat in a sort of trance. The thing was unbelievable, but it is your true romantic who takes advantage of the unbelievable. With one look round at the ghostly shadows of the little shop, he leaped upon the bench and out through the hole in the wall. And in a few minutes he was on the road leading up out of the valley, breasting the hill in the small hours, seeking afresh the adventures he craved, and musing with a

meditative eye upon the scene at which he regretfully relinquished all idea of being present when day broke and the result of his labours was discovered.

VI

Mr. Ferguson pauses as a couple of crashes resound near by. We look at each other in some trepidation. The Chief runs lightly half way down the ladder, waves his hand in a complicated manner, and rapidly ascends out of sight. Another crash—or perhaps crash does not convey the meaning. At the risk of appearing meticulous, one may say that those Turkish bombs now dropping around the ship sound to us below as if several thousand waiters, each with a tray of glasses, had fallen down some immense marble staircase in one grand débâcle.

"Good Heavens! what's that?" says Mr. Ferguson.

Mr. de Courcy mentions what it is, in his opinion.

"Fancy!" says Mr. Ferguson, staring hard at the young gentleman.

I don't think these two have ever made each other out yet. As a true romantic, Mr. Ferguson is doubtful of Mr. de Courcy's credentials. He suspects him of being one of those whom he calls "popinjays," and a conventional popinjay at that.

What Mr. de Courcy suspects, no man has ever discovered. I sometimes think he is one of those people who have no real existence of their own, who are evoked only by a conventional necessity, and

who, if you were to go to them as you go to those whom you love or hate, would be found to have vanished. I am always prepared, when I open Mr. de Courcy's cabin door, to find it empty, swept and garnished, the bed neat, untouched, the washstand closed, and a faint musty smell in the air. I cannot believe in his existence save when I behold him; and even then the long elegant fingers manipulating the gold-tipped cigarette, the tolerantly benignant smile, the jaunty pose, the mincing gait, suddenly assail me without any corresponding conviction that there is a human being concealed anywhere behind them. He is uncanny that way, and Mr. Ferguson feels it without understanding it.

As we climb the ladder, the Chief and the Third Engineer having relieved us until the bombs have ceased dropping, Mr. Ferguson admits that the young fellow "makes him afraid to live, sometimes"—a cryptic phrase. We lean on the bulwarks and watch the performances of our airmen chasing the Turks. Or is it the Turks chasing ours? We are not sufficiently versed in these warlike matters to decide. Ashore, on the long strip of yellow sand, we see the British Army on the march. We see the shrapnel bursting into black plumes ahead of them, and the sharp darts of flame from the ruins to the northward, where the Turks are working a battery to cover their retreat. We see the shrapnel, and the quick wink of heliographs from inland beyond the dunes. Some-

one points, and at length, after much searching, we descry one of our machines, a mere dot in the blue, over the Turkish fort.

This, mark you, is war. It has the precision of clockwork. It *is* clockwork. The huge squat monitor next us slowly swivels her turret toward the fort. One of the fourteen-inch muzzles rears, moves up and down and to and fro, as a man moves his neck in his collar.

"Now then," breathes Mr. Ferguson, "here we go gathering nuts and may, nuts and may, nuts and—— Gee! Now, I ask you," he says, after a pause between the explosion and the sudden rise of a tall plume of yellow smoke over the Turkish fort, "Now, I ask you, as one man to another, what is the use of all this? Think of those men in that——"

A shrapnel shell fired by a methodical and business-like Turkish gunner drops between us and a racing motor-launch, bursts with a damp thump, and spatters one or two fragments against the ship's sides.

Mr. Ferguson stops short, and looks offended. "No, but is it" he insists, not sparing me his oratory. "Here we are, wasting precious lives and money and so on, all at the bidding of the capitalistic classes. Isn't it silly? Isn't it sickening? Isn't it wicked? Why shouldn't the workers——"

"Below there! Stand by to hoist in planes!" sings out the C.P.O.; and instantly we are thrust aside as a swarm of men range themselves along the

rail. A plane flutters slowly over the water, one float smashed, wings slit, observer looking rather sick with a bullet in his thigh.

Well, he will get a medal, never fear. According to Mr. Ferguson, every airman receives three medals a week, just as he receives three meals a day. He is so bitter about it, you would think it was a personal grievance. That is his way. He thrives on grievances, as no dull realist could ever thrive on good fortune. The whole war is one gigantic grievance. Society is a festering sore and humanity a bad joke, posterity a bad dream. So he tells me.

Yet I have my own view. I have set it out here in a way. I see Mr. Ferguson away ahead, at peace let us hope, in some Home for Aged and Deserving Seamen, and I hear him telling the children round his wheel-chair how the Great War was fought, and how he too was there, as witness the medal with the faded ribbon on his breast. There is no bitterness in his voice, nor any talk of Capitalism (children not knowing such long words) or "popinjays" or "grinding toil." He has long since seen these things in a new light. But he is faithful in this, that he paints the irrevocable in all colours of fairyland. He will speak of the ship and the crew—even of me—with fond regret. He will lapse into silence as these memories overwhelm him. The sharp ridge of his twisted nose will glisten as it droops over his white beard, and he will mumble that those were heroic days.

It may be that they are. It may be that, while we plodding realists go on, for ever preoccupied with our daily chores, abstracting a microscopic pleasure from each microscopic duty, your true romantic has the truer vision, and beholds, afar off, in all its lurid splendour and terrible proportions, the piquant adventure we call Life.

THE CITY OF ENCHANTMENT

"It is a mystery to me," I heard the Surgeon remark in his refined, querulous voice, "how many men follow the sea all their lives, go all over the world, behold cities and men, and come home with minds to all intents and purposes an absolute blank."

"Apropos of what?" I asked. I had been sitting at the other end of the long ward-room table, and missed the immediate application of this remark. The stewards were setting coffee on the table and several men rose to catch the eight-o'clock liberty launch. I moved up.

"Well," said the Surgeon, lighting a cheroot, "it is apropos of nearly every sailor I've met since I joined the Navy, and also of the occasional few that came my way in practice ashore as well. But I was speaking of Barrett, the second watch keeper. Jolly good fellow, as you know, and has knocked about a bit. But when I asked him to-day at tea if he'd ever been in New Orleans, he said 'yes, often', and it was a rotten place. You see, I had been reading a story which referred to the city. Now Barrett's comment was typical I admit, but it was neither illuminating nor adequate."

"It doesn't follow," I observed, "that his mind is a blank, nevertheless. You misunderstand our mentality if you imagine you will get much local colour out of any of us. I don't suppose, if you interviewed a hundred men who had been there or any other place, that you would get any other answer."

"I can tell you why," interjected suddenly a man seated beside the Surgeon. I recognized him as the engineer-commander of a special-service ship lying near us at the canal buoys. He was a man of middle age, and his neatly trimmed gray beard and downward-drooping moustache gave him an air of settled maturity and established character. He was one of those men, I had already commented to myself, who embody a generic type rather than an individual character. He might have been anything, save for the distinguishing gold lace on his sleeve—navigator, paymaster, or a competent warrant-instructor of the old school. The Surgeon, who was his host on this occasion, looked at him inquiringly.

"I can tell you why," repeated the engineer-commander, taking out a cigarette case. "The fact is," he went on after accepting a match, "young men, when they go to sea, are romantic, but not incurably so. I have rarely found any one," he mused, smiling, "who was incurably romantic! One can't be, at sea. It is no sense of grievance

which leads me to imagine most of us as having had the romance crushed out of us. A young man's progress through life in our profession, so far from resembling the old-fashioned educational grand tour through Europe, is much more like the movement of a piece of raw material through a factory. He is tortured and tested and twisted, subjected to all sorts of racking strains to find out if he will stand up under the stresses of life, and finally emerges as an article good for one specific purpose and nothing else.

"All our social, professional, and economic forces tend to that consummation. We are not 'educated' at all, in the sense that other professions, the medical for instance, are educated; and the consequence is we lack the habits of agreeable self-expression. The bright romantic young fellow, just out of school, becomes in a few years a taciturn and efficient officer, who sends home monosyllabic letters from Cairo or Bagdad or Yokohama, and dreams of keeping chickens in Buckinghamshire. But don't imagine his reticence is proof that he is a fellow of no sentiment. Each of us cherishes some romantic memory of foreign parts—a girl, a city, a boarding-house, a ship, or even a ship-mate —a memory that tinges the fading past with iridescent glamour and of which we cannot be persuaded to talk.

"I have had experiences of that nature in days gone by. Like some of you, I was at sea in tramps,

and collected the usual bundle of romantic memories. What I was going to say was, that I knew New Orleans. I knew it in what was to me an entirely novel way. It was the first foreign place I ever lived in ashore. I shall never forget the impressions it made on me.

"I had never been even in the United States. There had been a bad slump in freights that year. I had just got my chief-engineer's license, and the expense of living at home had eaten well into my savings. When I got to Liverpool again to get a job, I found myself along with a good many others. I was like a hackney carriage. I had a license and I had to crawl round and round for somebody to hire me. Sounds strange nowadays when they are sending piano-tuners and lawyers' clerks and school teachers to sea and calling them sailors. I used to call in once a day at a little office where a sort of benevolent association had its headquarters. Most of us were always falling behind in our subscriptions and the secretary would have nothing to do with us. He was a big man with a bushy black beard, and I never found him doing anything else except playing billiards. They had a billiard-table in the back room, and he and two or three old chiefs of big Liverpool boats used to monopolize it. It happened by some chance that my subscription had been paid up at this time, so he had to give me some attention. One day when I strolled

in he waved to me with his cue and I sat down until he had finished his stroke. He then said he knew of a billet which would be the very thing for me. There was a twin-screw passenger boat going out to Boston to be taken over. She was going under the Cuban flag, he told me. He had had a letter from a friend in Belfast who was going Chief of her for the trip. I could go Fourth, and they would pay my passage home.

"Well it didn't sound very attractive, but I decided at once. I would go. My journey to Belfast took up a good deal of money I had left; in fact I broke my last five-pound note when I bought my ticket. I did not regret that. The fact was, I was afflicted with a sudden desire to visit America. I had been to all sorts of places like South Africa and Australia and India, but they had not satisfied me. I don't say I would have dismissed them all as 'rotten' places, but they had made no appeal. I had never really seen them, you understand. The United States, at that particular juncture in my life, did make some sort of subtle appeal to me. I had heard of men who had made their fortunes out there. I might tumble into something like that. I had read—oh, the usual things boys read in England. In the Sunday School at home they had had 'From Log Cabin to White House.' Mind you, it wasn't material success I was thinking about so much as the satisfaction of a queer craving I didn't

half understand. You see I was brought up as most of us were then, in an atmosphere of failure. There was always about one man in four out of work. The poorhouses were always well stocked with sturdy paupers for whom the industrial system had no use. We used to go about getting a job as though it was a criminal offence. We never dreamed of quitting. There were always fifty others waiting to snatch it from us. Without knowing just why, I had a restless craving to get away from all that. I wanted to live in some place where one could breathe, where the supply of labour was not so tremendously in excess of the demand. So I said I would go. I went over to Belfast and joined that ship. It was November, and we took her out, flying light, into winter North Atlantic.

"It was a terrible business. She was new, and her trials, because of the bad weather, had been of the sketchiest description. The skipper had secured the contract to take her over for a lump sum, he to find crew, food, and stores. He had not been particularly generous in any of these. There were just we four engineers and two mates. We had our meals in the passenger saloon, an immense place that glittered with mirrors and enamel and gilding, but with only one table adrift on an uncarpeted floor. It was curious to watch the steward emerge from the distant pantry and start on the voyage toward us bearing a tureen of soup. As the ship

rolled he would slide away to starboard over the smooth surface of the teak planking, holding the tureen horizontal as though he were carrying out some important scientific experiment. Then, just before he could bring up against the paneling, she would roll to port, and back he would come with knees bent and a weather eye for a grip of the nearest chair. When she rolled her rails right under, he would have to set the thing on the floor and kneel down with his arms round it, while we held on to the racks and waited. They rigged him a lifeline later on, but everything breakable was broken. One day there was a terrible crash upstairs, and the skipper and mate jumped from their seats and ran away up the grand staircase. The piano had been carried away in the music room and had dashed into a bookcase, end on. We had to get the crew in to lash it fast with ropes.

"The engine room was full of leaking steam- and water-pipes. Every bearing ran hot, and the stern glands had been so badly packed that the water was squirting through in torrents. And she was twin-screw with no oilers carried. I used to spend the four solid hours of my watch cruising round, hanging on to hand-rails, emptying oil-feeders upon her smoking joints. I had field-days every day down in the bilges, cleaning shavings and waste and workmen's caps out of the suctions. She rolled, pitched, bucked, and shivered. She did everything

except turn over. Twice the starboard engine broke down and we had to turn round and go with the weather until we could get it running again. I used to call her the ship who lost herself. She was all wrong. She had pumps no man could keep right, tucked away in corners no human being above the size of a Central African pigmy could work in. We had no tools and no tackle. And nobody cared. The one idea of everybody on board was to ger her into Boston, grab our wages and passage money, and run away as hard as we could go. I must say it was rather demoralizing for a young chap with his name to make. Of course the job itself was demoralizing. I pitied the chaps who were going to serve in her under the Cuban flag. I carried away no romantic memories: only a bad scald on my chest, where a steam joint had blown out and shot boiling water into my open singlet.

"And Boston made no particular impression either. I was paid off, given a railroad ticket to New York, and told to apply at a certain office for a passage home. We were shoved aboard a train which was red-hot one moment and ice-cold a moment after. We were all in a bunch at one end of the car and scarcely moved the whole time. The skipper, who had gone through the day before, met us at the Grand Central and took us down town. I remember lights, a great noise of traffic, cries to get out of the road, and a cross-fire of questions

about baggage. It was late afternoon. We roared down town in a warm subway. I was struck by the ceiling fans in the cars, and the stern preoccupation of a woman who sat next to me reading a book. When we emerged on Broadway the wind was driving the snow horizontally against our faces, and we became white exactly as though someone had sprayed us with whitewash through a nozzle.

"We fought our way down into a side street and up an elevator into an office. I stood on the edge of the little crowd trying to get some sort of system into my impressions. I became aware of words of disapproval: 'No! that won't do!' 'No; I was promised a passage.' 'You know perfectly well, Captain,' and 'What is it? A skin game?' I discovered the Captain and a man in a carefully pressed broadcloth suit arguing with the Mate and the Chief. I gathered they wanted some of us to waive our right to a passage home and sign on some other ship. The Chief would have nothing to do with it, and the Second and Third expressed their refusal in violent language. You couldn't blame them, for they were married. They were all married, I believe. I was the only single adventurer among them. They looked at me. I must have made some inquiry for I heard the words 'New Orleans. Hundred dollars a month. Free ticket.'

"Well, I had no idea where New Orleans was at that time. As far as I can recall I imagined it was

somewhere in South America. That didn't matter. I wasn't married and I had no relish for going back to Liverpool and beginning the same weary old chase for a job. I didn't have jobs thrown at me in those days. I astonished them all by saying I'd go. The Second said I must be crazy. The man in the broadcloth suit beckoned me up and asked for my papers. They seemed to satisfy him, and he telephoned to another office about my ticket. A small boy appeared, to take me over there, and I followed him out. I never saw any of the others again. The small boy led me along Broadway and into a big office where I received a ticket for New Orleans. Then I had to go back to the station and get my baggage. The whole business went on in a sort of exciting and foggy dazzle. Nothing remains clear in my mind now except that nobody regarded me as in the slightest degree of any importance. Even the small boy, chewing for all he was worth, cast me off as soon as he had steered me and my baggage to another station, and left me to wait for the train.

"I don't know even now how I managed to make the mistake. I dare say such a thing would be impossible nowadays. Anyhow I discovered the next morning I was on the wrong train. I believe we were bound for Chicago. I was rushing across a continent in the wrong direction. I had never done much railroad travelling anywhere—a few miles into

Liverpool, and a night journey from Cardiff to Newcastle was about the extent of it. I was bewildered. The conductor told me to go on, now I'd started, and take the Chicago route. I suppose I must have done that. I sat in a sort of trance, hour after hour, watching the train plough through immense tracts of territory of which I did not know even the names, through great cities that flashed and jangled before me, over rivers and through mountain passes. I had to get out and scamper over to other trains. I went hungry because I didn't know there was anything to eat on board. My razors were in my baggage and that was gone south by some other route. I had nothing with me except my papers and a box of cigarettes. I was in a day-car and my fellow travellers were constantly changing. At last I fell into conversation with a man about my own age. He it was who told me I could get a berth in the sleeping car if I wanted one. He took me out on the observation car at the end. He was a reporter, he said. Showed me some wonderful references from editors in California for whom he had worked. He had a mileage ticket, and was going from town to town looking for work. He said the Mississippi Valley was 'deader'n mud! No enterprise.' I have often wondered what he thought of me, a tongue-tied and reserved young Britisher wandering about the United States.

"It came to an end at last—some time on the

third evening, it must have been. The climate had been getting milder and it struck me that we must be approaching the equator. I began to wonder what was in store for me. I felt as though I had passed through a sort of tumultuous and bewildering purgatory. I found myself in an atmosphere so alien that I had no notion of where or how to catch on. I wandered about a great barn of a station trying to find somebody to attend to me. English fashion, I wanted to find my baggage. Nobody knew anything. Nobody cared. A big negro on the box of a cab flourished his whip. In desperation I got in, just in front of someone else. 'Whar you goin', sah?' he exclaimed dramatically. 'Take me to a hotel!' I replied. He made his whip crack like a pistol-shot, and we rattled off into the darkness.

"Of course I felt better next day. I had an address which the man in New York had given me. I remember the name—Carondelet Street. I remember it because it was the first intimation of the enchantment which New Orleans has always exercised over me. There was a fantastic touch about it which to me was delightful. I remember the magic of that first walk through the city across Royal Street, up Bourbon, across Canal and so into Carondelet. There was something bizarre even about the office I visited, too. I believe it had been originally built as the headquarters of some lottery, and it was full of elaborate carving and marble sconces and

glittering mirrors and candelabra. They wanted to know where I had got to. They had expected me the day before. One would have imagined from their impatience that I had kept a ship waiting, or something equally terrible. Now that I had come, they discovered they might not want me after all. I waited for something definite. After some telephoning, a man with a square sheet of pasteboard tied over his forehead, to act as an eye-shade, told me to go down to Louisa Street and see the chief of a ship refitting down there.

"I got on a trolley car and rumbled down interminable streets of wooden shacks, coming out abruptly in front of a high bank over which I could see the funnel and masts of a steamer. The Chief was a benevolent old German who had spent twenty years in the States. He patted me on the back and made me sit down on his settee while he filled a great meerschaum pipe. He had had a great deal of trouble, he told me. I wasn't surprised when I learned the facts. He had had a Swedish First Assistant, a very fine man he affirmed, very fine man indeed: good machinist and engineer, but he could not manage the Chinks. It was a pretty cosmopolitan crowd on that ship, I may tell you. They had Chinese firemen, Norwegian sailors, and officers of all nations. The Swedish First Assistant was now replaced by a Dutchman. I inquired what had become of the Swede, and the old gentle-

man informed me that the Chinks had done for him. He had gone ashore one night and had not come back. A day or two later, his body had been found in the river. 'But dey haf not found his head,' the old chap told me, looking extremely gloomy.

"It was a startling beginning. I had been shipmates with men who had lost their heads, but not with that disastrous finality. It appeared that I was to go Second Assistant if I shaped well. Mr. Blum was very anxious for me to shape well. 'You haf been with Chinks?' he asked. I had. More than that, I was able to say I liked them. 'That's right,' he assented heartily; 'if you like them, they are all O. K.' And then, in answer to a query of mine, he gave me an address in Lafayette Square, where I could get lodgings. 'They will do you well there,' he assured me.

"I went away to explore. I felt I was having adventures. This was better than walking about Liverpool in the rain trying to get a job. Here I was succeeding to a billet which had become vacant owing to a tyrannical Swede getting himself decapitated in a highly mysterious fashion. Mind you, there were other hypotheses which would account for the Swede's tragic demise. I came to the conclusion later that he probably fell off a ferry boat returning from Algiers on the other side of the river and got caught in the paddles. But at the time the Chink theory was popular. I didn't care.

One doesn't, you know, when one is young and without ties.

"And I explored. That old steamer which I had been sent to join was as queer as her crew. She had been built in Scotland twenty years before and had sailed under half a dozen flags. She had been bought by her present owners to keep her out of the hands of competitors, and she only ran when one of the others was laid up for overhaul. She was always breaking down herself. Sometimes I was weeks in New Orleans with her. Old Blum would wave his meerschaum and wag his head sagely. 'Say nutting,' he would remark, when any comment was thrown out about our indolent behaviour.

"He had a great friend who would come down to see him, a Russian named Isaac. I suppose he had another name but I never knew it. He was a ridiculously diminutive creature with a stubby moustache and round, coloured spectacles. He had escaped from Siberia, they told me, and after many wanderings had settled in New Orleans. He had a brother who was still in prison at Omsk, and he had some means of sending things to him. Some day he was going to get him away. But the curious thing about Isaac was his reputation for probity. When we were paid at the end of the month, we would hand our rolls to him and tell him to put them in the bank. He had a greasy note book in which he put down the totals among a lot of orders for

soap and matches and overalls. He dealt in everything. You could buy diamond rings and shoelaces, shirts and watches, from him. Where he kept his stock, if he had any, was a mystery. He flitted about, smiling and rubbing his hands, presenting a perfect picture of rascally evasion. And everybody trusted him. I never heard, but I have not the slightest doubt he eventually rescued his brother from Siberia. He had friends in San Francisco, Nagasaki, and Vladivostok. A queer character.

"I used to go off on tours through the old quarters of the city by myself. I saw some astonishing things. There was an old gentleman at our boarding house, for instance, who excited my curiosity. I used to follow him up St. Charles Street after dinner. He always came to a halt at Canal Street before crossing, and would swing round sharply as though he suspected someone spying upon him. He never took any notice of me, however. Then he would skip across and down Royal Street, turning into the Cosmopolitan. I used to go there myself, for a good many Englishmen patronized it. It was known among us as the Monkeywrench for some reason. This old chap would sit in a corner with a tall glass of Pilsner before him and read *L'Abeille*, that funny little French paper that used to say hard things about Lincoln during the Civil War. His gray hair was brushed straight up off his

forehead, and he had a trim gray moustache and a Napoleon tuft on his chin. About ten o'clock I would see him coming out and marching down Royal Street.

"One night I followed him, and saw him go into one of the old curio shops that abound down there. Well, one evening I had been wandering about near the Cathedral and was coming up Royal Street toward the Cosmopolitan. It was in darkness, for the shops down there were shut, but there was a brilliant glare of light in front of the restaurant. It was like watching a brightly lit stage from the darkness of the auditorium. People were passing in crowds, and a trolley car was making a great noise grinding its way down the street. I saw the old gentleman come out and pause, setting his big soft hat firmly on his head. And then, to my astonishment, a young man stepped swiftly out of the swing doors and struck the old gentleman with a dagger on the shoulder. He fell at once and the young man began to walk away. The old gentleman rose on his elbow, drew out a revolver and fired, twice. It was like a rehearsal of a melodrama. The young man fell against a passer-by. And then the inevitable crowd flew up from all sides and the narrow street was blocked with people.

"I kept on the outside. I had no desire to be drawn into the affair, whatever it was. A reporter in the next room to mine told me it was a feud,

and considered it the most ordinary thing in the world. The newspapers treated it in the same way. It was this matter-of-fact acceptance of what were to me astounding adventures that induced that curious impression of being in an enchanted city. I would be strolling along taking my evening walk in the dusk when I would catch sight of feminine forms on a balcony, with mantillas and fans, and I would hear the light tinkle of a guitar. Passers-by had a disconcerting habit of flitting into long dim corridors. I saw aged and dried-up people behind the counters of stores which never seemed to have any customers.

"I passed curio shops which appeared to be the abodes of ghosts. I shall never forget my adventure in the shop into which the old gentleman had been accustomed to vanish. I needed a shelf of some sort for my room, and I had a sudden notion of investigating this place. The window was full of the bric-à-brac which silts slowly down to the city from the old plantations; silver ware, crucifixes, bibelots, and candlesticks. It was away down past the Cathedral and the fireflies were flitting among the trees. I opened the door. A candle on a sconce was the sole illumination of the little shop, which was full of grandfather clocks. There must have been a dozen of them there, tall, white-faced spectres, and all going. I stood in astonishment. It was as if I had intruded upon a private meeting

of the fathers of Time. I had an impression that one of them, turned slightly toward his neighbour, was about to make a weighty remark. He cleared his throat with a hoarse rasp and struck seven! And all the others, with the most musical lack of harmony, joined in and struck seven as well.

"I was so preoccupied with this preposterous congregation that I had failed to notice the entrance of a tall thin person who was regarding me with austere disapproval. I wondered if she was going to strike seven. But she didn't. She wished to know what I wanted, and when I told her, she said she hadn't got it, and disappeared among the tall clocks. I went out into the summer evening wondering what tales those venerable timepieces were whispering among themselves—tales of this strange old city of enchantment, along whose streets flitted the ghosts of a dead past, fleeing before the roar of the trolley car and the foot of the questing stranger.

"For that is the dominating impression of one who dwells for a time in the city—an impression of intruding among mysteries of which one has no right to the key. You read Cable and become aware of other ghosts with which he has peopled the fantastic vistas of the French Quarter and the reaches of that enigmatic waterway up which sail the great ships with their cargoes of coffee and tropic fruit.

You begin to wonder whether you are the only real live human being doing business in that part of the world.

"I found a few, of course, as time went on. It so happened I came across one, a Scotchman too, who gave me that phrase—a city of enchantment. He kept a second-hand book-store along a little stone-flagged alley off St. Charles Street, an alley where there couldn't possibly be any business. I suppose he had some sort of mail-order trade with distant libraries, but he always seemed to part with a volume with intense reluctance. I had a lot of time on my hands, and was fond of reading; and he struck a bargain with me to bring the books back and he would make no charge for them. Some of his books he wouldn't sell at all. I got into the habit of dropping in during the evening for a talk. It became quite a club. There was an elderly Yankee from Connecticut, a lawyer who had been moving gently about the Union for years and had come to a gentle anchorage in the Crescent City. His ostensible occupations were chewing tobacco and commenting upon the fluctuating chalk-marks on the board at the Cotton Exchange. There was a fat Irishman who spent a good deal of time writing and printing ferocious pamphlets dealing with Home Rule and Holy Ireland. There was I, a lonely young Englishman, becalmed in a foreign port. And there was a sharp-nosed little man who enveloped himself in mystery

and took a malicious pleasure in evading identification.

"It was one evening when the twilight—which was half an hour earlier in that narrow flagged passage than in the open street—was falling, and filling the old shop with strange shadows, that I heard our host's voice saying: 'Yes, this is a city of enchantment. It catches the imagination. As we drift about the world we grow weary of the futility of human life, but we are urged on to fresh voyages and travels. Always we see a better prospect ahead. We are deceived, it is not so. We sigh for our native villages and dream of golden futures. So it goes on, until by chance we come to this strange city of enchantment, built upon the drowsy marshes of a great river, and—we stop! We go no farther. We become incurious about the future and we look back upon the past without regret. Is it not so? We are all like that. A city of enchanted transients. Lotus-eaters of the Mississippi. Hobos of elevated sentiments who lack the elementary effort to move on!"

"Of course, he was joking, but there was a certain acrid sediment of truth in the stream of his eloquence. It gave me a key to the mystery which seemed to brood over the city during the long months of humid heat. It directed my attention to the bizarre contrast between this sombre melancholy and the sharp crackling modern business-life that

roared up Canal Street and burst into a thunderous clangour in the vast warehouses on the levee, where the cotton and sugar and coffee and fruit came and went, and the river spread its ooze among the piles below. And it evoked a potent curiosity in the man himself and the folks who had come to a stop, as he put it, around him.

"The sharp-nosed little man remarked to me as we went away one evening, that our friend B—— was 'well posted'. That was the unsophisticated verdict of one who, as I say, took a malicious pleasure in shrouding himself in mystery. He compensated us for this by exhibiting a startling familiarity with the private lives of everybody else we had ever heard of, from the President of the Republic to the old Chief of my ship. It was his pleasure to appear suddenly before us as we sat in the back of that old bookstore. He would disappear in the same enigmatic fashion. He would recount to us dark and fascinating stories of the people who passed the window as we sat within. He would wait by the door until some stranger had gone, and then with a muttered excuse, slink out and be seen no more.

"He told us what he called the facts of the feud of which I had seen the dramatic dénouement in Royal Street. The young chap was a Hungarian, son of a count who had sent him a remittance on receipt of a letter every month from the old gentleman, a Creole connection. The letter was to certify that

the son was in America. For some reason the old gentleman, who owned enormous property but had no money, had declined to sign the certificate. The young man had calmly forged it. There had been a quarrel. So our mysterious sharp-nosed little friend told us. He knew why the house in Melisande Street had been closed, and conveyed the information in a thrilling whisper behind a curved palm. He hinted at desperate doings going on almost at our elbows in the dark corners of the old city; Chinamen tracked to their death by minions of secret societies in Mongolia, Italian peanut vendors who were in the pay of Neapolitan high-binders, Englishmen shadowed by Mexican assassins. We would sit in the heavy dusk in our shirt-sleeves, the occasional glare of a match illuminating our listening faces, while he revealed to us the secrets by which we were surrounded.

"Did we believe him? I did. I was young, and it was as though he fulfilled for me the veiled promise of the old city to tell me its story and envelop me in the glamour of its enchantment. I would like to believe him still, but I cannot. He is too improbable for me now. Sometimes I wonder whether he ever existed, whether he did not evolve out of the heavy exhalations of that swampy delta where so many mysteries lie buried in the dark mud below the tall grasses, a sort of sharp-nosed transient Puck, intriguing our souls with tales out of a dime novel,

and tickling our imaginations with a bogus artistry. I would like to believe him still; but as the years pass I have an uneasy suspicion that he too had fallen a victim to the spirit of the place, and was evoking, for our delectation, his own pinchbeck conception of a city of enchantment."

A NEW AND ENTERTAINING METHOD OF REVIEWING BOOKS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED TO THE PROFESSION

OF COURSE, the point of the joke is that the reviewer, in the present case, is not a reviewer at all, but, as described in a former article, a Lieutenant of Reserve. The regular blown-in-the-glass reviewers must not imagine that he is trying to do them out of a job. On the contrary, the most probable upshot will be that the regular, blown-in-the-glass style of reviewing books will be seen to hold the field if we are to get anywhere. For it is presumed that these gentlemen really are trying to get somewhere with their criticism, that they are shooting to kill, and not merely announcing new books. . . .

In the first place, I ought to confess that I envy the professional reviewer. I figure him, seated in the monastic calm of a richly appointed library, the walls gleaming with the russet and blue and gold of leather bindings—gifts from wealthy authors in token of their gratitude; a bust of Plato behind the door on the Encyclopædia Britannica case; a broad heavy table covered with the reviews of two continents, and a pile of new books

—for review. I figure him seated in his great chair, a man of noble forehead and deep discriminating eyes. His dress is rich yet dishevelled, and he toys with a gold-tipped cigarette as he prepares his thoughts for transcription to the big pad of fine paper before him. He is rich and respectable. The silence of the great room is interrupted for a moment as his daughter, a being of matchless beauty, trips into the sanctum and, seated on the arm of his chair, covers his fine iron-gray head with her own tumbled golden tresses. He signs the check, of course, as I figure him, his left arm encircling the slender waist. Another moment, and she is gone. He smiles. This reviewer has a charming smile. He reaches for his note-pad and writes, still smiling. I look over his shoulder (in imagination). There is a golden hair on his coat. He has written: "True happiness consists in avoiding those who are getting more out of life than we are." He thinks he has thought of something new, and smiles again, deciding to bring it into the article he is about to write.

Now it is no abuse of language to say that, in the above picture of a reviewer, I am not describing myself. The present writer is neither rich nor respectable. His dress is the uncomfortable white uniform of a naval officer in the tropics, a uniform designed by a non-smoker, a non-reader, a non-writer, and a nonentity generally, I should say. Even the "big pad of fine white paper" is out of the

picture in this case, for such a thing has not been seen on the ship for months. Indeed, it is quite on the cards that this article will be finished on a naval signal pad, which will certainly confirm it as a novel way of reviewing books.

Nor is the "richly appointed library" to be found in our vicinity. In passing, it is humiliating to reflect how very few hours I have ever spent in richly appointed libraries. Some ships have libraries, it is true, securely locked up, so that you have to wait meekly upon some pug-nosed autocrat of a steward who stands just behind you, breathing down your neck, while you endeavour to find a congenial volume among the roach-ravened stacks of bygone best sellers. But our ship has no library save a mahogany cabinet in the chart room containing some mysterious volumes bound in sheet-lead, so that when flung overboard to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy, they will sink. Our ship has very little of anything, after the manner of ships in which the fittings, from the wireless to the engines, are of destroyer pattern. There is a legend that when anybody gets up in our ward-room, everybody else has to rise to let him move round. The letter-copying press is on the ice chest, and the rifle rack is bolted against the chronometer case. So there is no library. Therefore, when I was bitten with the notion that I wanted to write a book review, I decided to do it ashore.

To explain how a Lieutenant of Reserve, in Levantine waters, becomes possessed of anything to review, it should be said that the editor of a magazine, with the sagacity pertaining to editors, had sent over a bale of new publications, deeming it possible that said Lieutenant might go mad for lack of mental stimulus, and so bring shame to the ancient and honourable company of men of letters. A Maltese steward, suborned for the purpose, dumps these volumes into a canvas bag and goes ashore with them—leaving them in the care of my good friend M. Eskenazi, licensed money-changer, who has a microscopic Bureau de Change under the high arcades of the Passage Kraemer, which runs beneath the Hôtel Splendide Palace, and debouches upon the Rue Parallel. It is to this same lofty and multitudinous Passage Kraemer—when the westering sun, just before he sinks down and silhouettes Cordelio on the other side of the Gulf, black against red-gold, sends his level, blinding rays from end to end of the arcades—that I repair with pipe and note-book, and sit down at a particular table in a nook opposite the microscopic office of M. Eskenazi. He regards me through his pigeonhole, and we exchange salutations as I call the waiter from the café behind me by clapping my hands.

M. Eskenazi is much occupied. While I am consuming a lemon-and-mint ice cream, he sells some opium to the chief officer of a Japanese vessel;

an ounce of hashish to a venerable old Russian with quavery knees and an incredibly fine panama hat; and two postal-cards to a petty officer of an Italian battleship. He changes two one-pound notes into Turkish paper for a naval officer from our flag-ship; advises a shady-looking personage, who seems to be a Scandinavian, upon some recondite subject; shoos away sixteen small boys and girls who are begging round his window; and buys, for spot cash, a magnificent pair of German prismatic field-glasses from an individual who has evidently not washed for weeks, and who probably stole them from the dead body of some Turkish officer lying under a cloud of vultures in the gorges of the mountains behind the city. And all the while the people of Smyrna pass to and fro in throngs; rich and poor, high and low, Gentile, Jew, and Greek, Ottoman, Armenian, Balkan, and Muscovite, Latin, Levantine and Teuton, young and old, virtuous and so forth—a motley swarm. Here then is the correct milieu, to my mind, for the reviewing of books—a seat at a café in the very heart of the city, a front stall in the great theatre of life.

M. Eskenazi, seizing the opportunity afforded by a lull in his multifarious dealings, comes over smiling, the canvas bag in his hand, to drink his mastic and discuss the news. The Turkish pound is down again, he remarks pensively, by which he means that said Turkish pound, worth four dollars

in 1914 and a dollar-twenty-five yesterday, has dropped to a dollar fifteen. Silently I hand him a few English notes, and he goes over and extracts the current exchange from a small but formidable safe buried under a heap of Persian mats. I am his friend, he says, so he gives me the benefit of his knowledge. Money-changers, and Jewish money-changers in particular, seem to have a bad name in history. I recall an incident in the temple at Jerusalem. . . . Personally I prefer them to Pharisees. M. Eskenazi is a Jewish money-changer. His ancestors fled from Toledo in Torquemada's day and settled here in Smyrna, where the benighted Ottomans suffered them to dwell and prosper. He speaks Spanish in his home; English to me; French, Greek, Turkish, and Armenian in his business. He resembles a composite portrait of Lord Kitchener and the Earl of Derby, and is a most entertaining companion.

M. Eskenazi enters with zest into my plan for reviewing books out in the open, as it were, for he imagines that thereby I am earning immense sums of money. He understands money. He knows a great many ways of making money. This writing business intrigues him. It is, to him, a novel idea. They actually pay you for it, he murmurs. An extraordinary country, America! What gets him is that, in America, an editor can pay money. Now here, an editor is on the same social and financial

plane as a shoe-shine boy or an itinerant peanut vendor. He is for ever behind with his rent. He spends much of his time in jail, for attacking the Government, or the powers, or because he cannot pay his debts. He is a shadowy creature, having no continuous abode. His journals have their day, and cease to be. A small hand-printing press, a bale of dirty white paper, and a tin trunk full of miscellaneous Hellenic, Ottoman, and Latin type, all piled on a donkey cart—and he is away to a distant quarter of the city to start life afresh. He resembles a Bolshevik who has got out of touch with the treasury department. In summer he wears an unfortunate suit of near-linen and a battered straw hat; in winter a mangy rabbit-fur-lined coat and a derby. When I tell M. Eskenazi that some editors in America earn as much as a dollar a day and are received in society, he is astounded. Evidently a country of illimitable resources. He finishes his mastic, lights a cigarette, and hurries over to attend to two customers, while I open the canvas bag and examine, one by one, the books I am about to review.

It seems almost to savour of magic, after our discussion of money, to draw out first (and quite unwittingly) "Midas and Son" by Stephen McKenna. The easy, sumptuous and, rapid modern style of Mr. McKenna depends for its success upon a strong, non-literary central idea. I mean, no one would

read this sort of book for its style alone. As far as I can make out there is no such central idea in "Midas and Son" as there undoubtedly was in "Sonia." "Sonia" was a remarkable book in many ways; not the least remarkable being the cool revelation of graft as practised among the patrician English. It was a picture, not only of two contrasted Englands, but of two violently antagonistic social forces at work in a disintegrating community. Such a book is bound to be interesting. But a book which has for its theme simply immense wealth cannot be interesting. Money in itself is the most uninteresting subject on earth. M. Eskenazi is of this opinion. I have gathered from him that granted even if money does talk, which he doubts, its conversation is not entertaining out of office hours. Money, he holds, is an admirable servant and an abominable master. And one does not take an absorbing interest in servants.

Apart from this, as I watch the cosmopolitan throng surge to and fro through the Passage Kraemer, as I note our esteemed admiral shaking hands with an equally esteemed Italian general at the entrance of the Hôtel Splendide Palace, it occurs to me that this latest book of Mr. McKenna's is a good example of the sort of fiction we got used to during the war. Perhaps the last of its race. It is nervous in accomplishment. One gets "rattled," at times, reading it. It is obviously the work of a member of

50710

the cultured governing classes. Intensely dramatic moments are hurried over—not because they are inartistic, but because the behaviour of the characters has become repugnant to the good form of the cultured governing classes. And it carries on what seems to have become almost a craze with some novelists—the habit of introducing characters from previous novels. M. Eskenazi cannot assist me much here, but I am inclined to believe his ethics would not admit this sort of thing in trade. One would think, too, when a novel is finished, that an author would be only too glad to turn his characters out of doors to shift for themselves. If I had been consulted about the League of Nations, I should certainly have stood out for a clause abolishing trilogies. . . . But of course this is no way of reviewing books.

M. Eskenazi, I observe, is accommodating two lengthy bluejackets in American uniform, as I draw out another volume, which proves to be Cecil Chesterton's "History of the United States." M. Eskenazi has a high opinion of the United States Navy. An American battleship in the harbour, with fourteen hundred men on board, has been of considerable profit to him as a vendor of Turkish carpets, Persian rugs, and so forth. He says the American naval man has two shining qualities—he has money to spend, and he spends it. They certainly satisfy the eye, these husky gentlemen,

in their spotless rig and with their extremely brown faces and candid eyes. I feel very glad that an Englishman has at length been found who considered the history of the United States worth writing about. If some modern Diogenes, instead of wandering round looking for such a common object as an honest man, had tried to find an Englishman who had read the history of the United States, he would have had to give up in despair.

There is an additional reason for gratitude. Ever since G. K. Chesterton wrote "A Short History of England," I have been terrified lest he should deal the United States the same devastating blow. I have a theory that Cecil, who had been to America, pleaded with his more famous brother to spare a young and confiding nation, to give them a chance, and that G. K. C., with magnificient generosity, consented!

For if he had written this book it would have been all wrong. Without yielding to anybody on earth in my admiration for G. K. Chesterton—(did I not discover him in the *Saturday Daily News* nearly twenty years ago?)—I am quite sure there is nobody on earth less fitted to understand or write about the United States. Cecil Chesterton, on the other hand, was just the man. The book is advertised in England as "the ideal short history for the general reader." It is just that. American readers must remember that the "general reader" in England

has never heard of the Ku Klux Klan or Mason and Dixon's Line. His ideas of a Chautauqua are as vague as his conception of a barbecue or a picayune. The terms "native son," "creole," "carpet-bagger," "hoosier" and so on, mean nothing to him. The famous "James boys" and the equally famous brothers William and Henry James, are all one to him. Daniel Webster, he believes, wrote a dictionary. Well, if he didn't, what about it? Nevertheless, this same "general reader" in England, whom I ask Americans to pity as they would pity a denizen of Central China or the Congo, has some sparks of good in him. He is not altogether unregenerate. He hasn't had a chance, so far. Henry the Eighth's wives and the Boston Tea Party have been too much for him. Even now he has an uneasy notion that he is not well informed about this nation across the sea which, in such an incredibly brief period, trained and equipped and flung nineteen hundred thousand men into France to aid us, in the hour of our terrible need, to hold and throttle and beat the ugly life out of the barbarian hordes. He has heard somewhere that these men are of his own race. And now here is a book, written by a private in the British army in a splendidly clear and forcible style, a style such as G. K. Chesterton might write if he were only content to let words *speak*, instead of making them do ground and lofty tumbling, as well. The outlook for the general reader is bright. I look

forward to referring casually, in English company, to Aaron Burr, or the Battle of New Orleans, without being confronted by that icy stare of non-comprehension which is one of the marvels of our island story.

Apropos of this, the very next book I fish out of my canvas bag is Robert Cortes Holliday's "Walking-Stick Papers." Here, as Squeers remarked, is richness. It used to be a brag of mine, in the days when I was a drummer in Merrie England, that I could not only design and build an engine, but I could sell it afterward. Mr. Holliday has sold books as well as written them. I like this sort of thing. The great trouble with so many of our literary men is that they can't do anything else. And it is one of the peculiarities of the artist and the saint that their equipment comes by other roads. George Moore, who is of course an artist and not a saint, seems to reckon his career in Paris as a painter a sad failure. It seems to me, after an attentive and admiring study of his works, that he owes as much to his training as a painter as to his early experiences as a stable boy in his father's stud. But apart from the piquant flavour lent to the "Walking-Stick Papers" by the author's experiences as a bookseller, the essays appeal to me because it is just this kind of writing which our younger men in England cannot do. There is a nimbleness of mind—a freedom from silly, mawkish, conventional forms—which does not seem to flourish in our

humid and chilly air. An Englishman never takes his collar off when he is writing. How can you expect him to show you his soul?

Another example of the same American genius for this literary gambolling comes out of the bag—Christopher Morley's "Rocking Horse." Comes out prancing and curveting, and neighing and shying—obviously at the bizarre surroundings of the Passage Kraemer, with its startling costumes and brilliant colours. Shies at more than this, for the rocking horse, be it understood, is a domestic animal. Only respectable married folk keep rocking horses. One recalls Hugh Walpole's laconic comment when Mr. Holliday said he was married. "All Americans are," murmured Mr. Walpole. And so it seems. Late last night at Costi's Restaurant in the Rue de Malte, a party of young American naval officers one and all confessed that they were married. Which is most edifying, but has nothing to do with a review of books. What is left in the canvas bag?

John Keats has recorded his feelings in a famous sonnet when he discovered Chapman's "Homer," comparing his joy to that of some lonely watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken. At the risk of making an astronomical blunder, I prefer to call Ellen La Motte a star rather than a planet. It may not be so scientific but it is more polite and more true.

"Civilization," a collection of short stories dealing

with the European in China, is one of those books which slip into circulation without a vast deal of clatter, and establish themselves firmly in the inner affections of a number of people who know good work from bad. They do not become best sellers, as far as I am aware, and quite possibly the warm-hearted people who support best sellers may want to know just what there is in a book like "Civilization" to rouse such emotions among the *cognoscenti.* Alas! *cognoscenti* are always being pestered to give their reasons. Many *cognoscenti* have grown weary of explaining and remain in hiding, quietly enjoying the fruits of their enterprise. Of course, no such behaviour is possible to a reviewer. He must tell why he likes a book or cease to be a reviewer. Well, the secret is a technical one, and it is called "atmosphere." How this atmosphere is produced, I don't quite know. If I did, I should produce it myself and so acquire an enduring fame. I admit this is not the correct sort of thing to say in a review. In England, at any rate, a reviewer invariably leaves on the mind of the reader a notion that he (the reviewer) could have written the book himself and written it better, with a further comforting assurance that he (the reader) could, with a little practise, do it too. In this way the reviewer is glorified, the reader is gratified, and the author, poor wight, is frequently tempted to commit suicide.

While I am reaching to the bottom of the canvas bag for the remaining volume, a young person appears among the hundreds of young persons passing to and fro, who is singularly apropos. She advances, and forestalling my intention, drags a chair up to my table and sits down. I say she is singularly apropos, because the remaining book is Conrad's "Arrow of Gold." M. Eskenazi joins us during a lull in his affairs. I order ices, mastic, and coffee. We converse, while I turn once again the pages of Mr. Conrad's extraordinary romance. The newcomer does not speak English. Lest you should form an erroneous estimate of her qualifications as a heroine, let me add that in addition to her native tongue she speaks French, German, Italian, Russian, Greek, Turkish, and Spanish. She regards the pile of books on the table without any discernible emotion. Books to her are nothing. She likes illustrated journals of fashions, especially *les modèles amèricains*. Politics, as we know them, are nothing to her. Her orientation differs from ours. She loves the English, the Americans, and the Germans, and she hates the Greeks, the French, and the Armenians. She has never been farther north than Sophia, farther west than Athens, or farther east than Constantinople. Books to her are nothing. Yet her viewpoint is of value, since men to her are everything and out of men books are made. And being polite, she is good enough

to inquire what is the book which I have in my hand. It is "The Arrow of Gold." And what is it about?

This places me in a quandary because, although I have read the book with attention, I am not at all clear what it is about. It is a dreadful confession for a confirmed and lifelong Conradian to make, but I have no clear notion of anything happening in the story. It is dreadful because, if there is one artist alive to-day who can actually, as Meredith Nicholson says, push a character through the door and let him speak for himself, it is Conrad. Many of his characters are going about to-day, for it is rational to assume that if an author's creations really are creations, one may easily meet them. I met several of them at a hotel in Malta. There was Kurtz, from "Heart of Darkness," not dead at all, in the full-dress uniform of a Russian imperial guardsman. There was Schomberg, disguised as a Swiss automobile salesman. There was Captain MacWhirr, from "Typhoon," in the uniform of the Royal Naval Reserve, breathing heavily at a table by himself, and remarking, when interrogated, that he had no remembrance of ever going through a typhoon. "We used to have dirty weather at times, of course," he murmured.

But most of the characters in "The Arrow of Gold" are too thin ever to materialize like that. As opposed to Miss La Motte's "Civilization" with its indubitable atmosphere and mastery of illusion,

"The Arrow of Gold" seems to have been written designedly without atmosphere. The characters remain suspended in a kind of passionless ether. And this leads me to enunciate a daring theory—that Mr. Conrad, in this book, has endeavoured to evoke some transient memories of a too-long-vanished past. There is always this danger besetting the artist, because some people and scenes seem to have the faculty of imposing themselves upon his imagination without bringing with them any adequate capacity for transmutation into terms of art. They are, if one may venture a phrase, brilliant and sterile phantoms. They are as vivid as a flash of lightning in the memory, yet one can do nothing with them. Such a figure is Doña Rita, in "The Arrow of Gold." Such a place is the Street of the Consuls in Marseilles. One can see Mr. Conrad trying to galvanize her into some sort of life corresponding to the life of humanity, but she won't move. She does nothing comprehensible from beginning to end. She is a phantom. One never believes in Monsieur George's love for her at all. One struggles to visualize the original of this charming and exasperating being, seen in the dazzling sunlight of Marseilles—no sooner seen than gone.

So, too, with the Street of the Consuls. It reminds me of the Rue d'Aventure in Marseilles, which I beheld in the small hours, one night last winter.

A high, narrow, hermetically sealed sort of street, with flag-poles sticking out of upper windows, and immense black doors that seemed closed for all eternity. It was bright moonlight and the line of shadow lay exactly down the middle of the roadway. I had an appointment with a torpedo lieutenant who spoke no French, and who had no notion of the position of our ship in the immense harbour. And as I stood at the top of this sombre and menacing street of adventure, a large rat crept out of the moonlit gutter and started along the street. And then another. After garbage. I stood entranced, for rats do not forage in the streets in England. And I became aware suddenly of someone who had managed to emerge from one of those immense and seemingly immovable portals—a figure in an opera cloak and French top-hat, and very drunk. A long white kid glove dangled from his hand and he waved it gently toward me as he swayed across the street. All without a sound, save a fiacre rattling out of the Cannebière just beyond. Swayed into the middle of the street, where the shadow lay like something solid and impregnable, the fingers of the long white kid glove dragging on the ground—when he saw a rat, and giving a sudden lurch, vanished forever into the shadow. The fiacre rattled louder; and turning, I discovered the torpedo lieutenant inside of it, very relieved, to find me after all.

Now here are the beginnings of tales like "The

Arrow of Gold," tales founded upon vivid but unsubstantial memories. I shall never forget that man in the opera cloak with his preposterous air of mysterious gaiety and his long white kid glove. He will remain with me for ever, an interesting, brilliant, and sterile phantom.

In the meanwhile I have been trying to explain the essential psychology of Doña Rita, that elusive and shadowy being about whom, presumably, "The Arrow of Gold" is written. Doña Rita kept goats on the Spanish mountains when she was a child. My companion gets that with facility: she kept sheep and helped her mother on the hills near Sophia. Yes, bare-footed and bare-legged, looking down now for a moment at the high French heels of her white shoes. Well, then, Doña Rita is now rich and unhappy. *Pourquoi?* Does she not love that *homme de mer*, Monsieur George? Humph! She sets one elbow among the dishes and regards me attentively from under the brim of an immense straw hat trimmed with osprey. *Les hommes de mer*, she murmurs, and looks away toward the kaleidoscopic procession passing through the Passage Kraemer. She forgets "The Arrow of Gold." Books are nothing to her, as I expect they were nothing to Doña Rita. And like Doña Rita she is one of those beings who inspire love, who disturb the dim and ineluctable memories of the past, and who give to the most transient of our illusions the aspect of a grave resolution of the soul.

"She was supremely lovable," says Monsieur George of Doña Rita, and therein he compresses the theme of the book. Perhaps it was an error to assume that none of these characters can walk the solid earth. Perhaps the arrow of gold finds its mark. Perhaps Doña Rita waits here, while I, *pauvre homme de mer*, restore the canvas bag of books to the care of M. Eskenazi.

So few women are "supremely lovable."

ON A BALCONY

I

THERE are some men whom a staggering emotional shock, so far from making them mental invalids for life, seems, on the other hand, to awaken, to galvanize, to arouse into an almost incredible activity of soul. They are somewhat in the same cast as the elderly expressman who emerged from a subway smash untouched, save that he began to write free verse. Those who do not read free verse may consider the comparison too flippant. But the point must be insisted on, that there is far too much talk of love and grief benumbing the faculties, turning the hair gray, and destroying a man's interest in his work. Grief has made many a man look younger.

Or, one may compare the emotions with wine. The faculties of some men become quiescent with wine. Others are like Sheridan writing "The School for Scandal" light on through the night, with a decanter of port at his elbow getting emptier as the pages (and Sheridan) got full; or like Mozart drinking wine to stimulate his brain to work, and employing his wife to keep him awake at the same time.

There was a singular disparity between the above trivial reflections and the scene upon which they were staged. I was seated on the balcony outside my room on the third floor of the Grand Hôtel Splendide Palace at Smyrna. I was to leave that afternoon for Constantinople, having been relieved, and I had been watching with some attention the arrival of the destroyer upon whose deck, as a passenger, I was to travel.

I was distracted from this pastime by the growing excitement in the street below. Greek troops, headed by extremely warlike bands, were marching along the quay, gradually extending themselves into a thin yellowish-green line with sparkling bayonets, and congesting the populace into the fronts of the cafés. A fantastic notion assailed me that my departure was to be carried out with military honours. There is an obscure memorandum extant in some dusty office-file, in which I am referred to as "embarrassing His Majesty's Government"—the nearest I have ever got to what is known as public life. The intoxication engendered proved conclusively that public life was not my *métier*.

But I was not to be deceived for long on this occasion. Motor-cars drove up, bearing little flags on sticks. A Greek general, a French admiral, an Italian captain, and a British lieutenant of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve jumped out of their respective chariots and, after saluting with

the utmost decorum, shook hands with the utmost cordiality. Looked at from above, the scene was singularly like the disturbance caused by stirring up a lot of ants with a stick.

By this time it was perfectly obvious that something more than the departure of a mere lieutenant of reserve was in the air. I knew that Royal Naval Volunteer lieutenant, and the hope, the incipient prospect, of another taste of public life died within me. After all, I reflected (and this is how I led up to the other reflections already recorded), after all, one must choose between Obscurity with Efficiency, and Fame with its inevitable collateral of Bluff. There is a period, well on toward middle life, when a man can say such things to himself and feel comforted.

I knew that Royal Naval Volunteer lieutenant, and I began to recall some remarks he had made the previous evening at dinner. He had said something about some big man coming. This was at the British Naval Residency, which was to be found, by the intrepid, in the Austrian Consulate. The British Naval Residency filled the Austrian Consulate very much as a penny fills the pocket of a fur overcoat. You could spend a pleasant morning wandering through the immense chambers of the Austrian Consulate and come away without having discovered any one save a fat Greek baby whose mother washed in some secret subterranean chamber.

I was supposed to be messing at the British Naval Residency. I had even been offered by my country's naval representative (this same Royal Naval Volunteer lieutenant) the use of any room I liked, to sleep in, if I had a bed, and bed-clothes to put on it. He even offered me the throne-room—a gigantic affair about the size of the Pennsylvania Terminal and containing three hassocks and a catafalque like a half-finished sky-scraper. At night, when we dined, an intrepid explorer who, we may suppose, had reached the great doors after perils which had turned him gray, would see, afar off across the acres of dried and splitting parquetry flooring, a table with one tiny electric light, round which several humans were feasting. If his travels had not bereft him of his senses, he might have gathered that these extraordinary beings were continually roaring with laughter at their own wit. Out of the gloom at intervals would materialize a sinister oriental figure bearing bottles whose contents he poured out in libations before his humorous masters.

This frightful scene (near on midnight) was the British Naval Residency at dinner. I ought to have paid attention—only I was distracted by an imaginary bowstring murder going on in the throne-room beyond the vast folding doors—and then I would have heard the details of the function taking place below my hotel windows. But it is impossible to pay attention to the details of a ceremonial while a

beautiful Circassian, on her knees between two husky Ottoman slaves who are hauling at the cord which has been passed in a clove-hitch about her neck, is casting a last glance of despair upon the ragged and cobwebbed scarlet silk portière. It may be objected that, as the tragedy was an imaginary one, I was not compelled to dwell upon it. The reader and I will not quarrel over the point. I will even make him a present of the fact that there are no beautiful Circassians in that part of the world. They have all been kidnapped and carried away to the seraglios of our popular novelists, who marry them, in the last chapter, to dashing young college men of the "clean-cut" breed. But the British Naval Resident's cook is an artist, and the British Naval Resident's kümmel, while it closes the front doors of the mind to the trivial tattle of conversation, draws up the dark curtain that hangs at the back and reveals a vast and shadowy stage, whereon are enacted the preposterous performances of the souls of men.

II

BUT however hazy I might be myself about this event, all Smyrna seemed cognizant. As I sat on my balcony, I was joined by the children of the family in the next room. Who the family in the next room may be I am somewhat at a loss to explain. At first I imagined they were a family of Russian re-

fugees named Buttinsky; but Katia, the eldest, who is ten and speaks French, says her father is a major of artillery and is named Priam Callipoliton. From occasional glances through the open door while passing, one imagines that a married major in the army of the Hellenes has a fierce time when he is at home. There are three beds in the room, besides a gas-stove and a perambulator. Leaning over my balcony railing one early morning, and poking with a walking-stick at an enigmatic crimson patch on the Callipoliton window-sill, I discovered, to my horror, that it was a raw liver, left out to keep cool.

Priam seems to be fairly hard at it at the front. Madame, a shapeless and indomitable creature, regards me with that look of mysterious yet comfortable *camaraderie* which women with large families seem to reserve for strange bachelors. I like her. She uses my balcony (having none of her own) with a frank disregard of the small change of etiquette which is beyond praise. I come up from the street in the middle of the morning and find Madame and the *femme de chambre* leaning comfortably on my balcony-rail, a sisterly pair, each couple of high French heels worn sideways, each broad-hipped skirt gaping at the back, each with a stray hank of hair waving wildly in the strong breeze blowing across the glittering gulf. If I cough, they turn and nod genially. If I explain apologetically that

I wish to change, they nod again and shut the big *jalousies* upon me and my astounding modesty.

And if they are not there, the children are. Katia is the possessor of three small sisters and a small brother. They are Evanthe, Theodosia, and Sophia with Praxiteles sifted in somewhere between them. They were rather amazing at first. "*Êtes-vous marié?*" they squeaked in their infantile Hellenic trebles. "*Pas encore*" only made them point melodramatic fingers at a photograph, with their ridiculous black pigtails hanging over their shoulders. "*C'est elle, peut-être. Oui? Très jolie!*" And the pigtails vibrated with vehement nods.

They use my balcony. Praxiteles has a horrifying habit of sitting astride the rail. Katia takes the most comfortable chair and asks me genially why I do not go and make a promenade. "*Avec votre fiancée,*" she adds, with enervating audacity. And I am supposed to have the exclusive use of this room, with balcony, for three pounds (Turkish) *per diem!*

The point, however, is that, if this be the state of affairs on ordinary days, on this particular morning my balcony, like all the other balconies, is full. Madame and the *femme de chambre* are there. Katia, Evanthe, Theodosia, Sophia, and Praxiteles are to be heard of all men. Praxiteles endeavours to drag an expensive pair of field-glasses from their case, and is restrained only by main force. George, the floor-porter, a sagacious but unsatisfactory

creature, who plays a sort of Jekyll-and-Hyde game with the *femme de chambre*, comes in, on the pretence of cleaning the electric light fittings, and drifts casually to the balcony. George, descended no doubt from the famous George family of Cappadocia, if rung for, goes away to find Marthe, the *femme de chambre*. Marthe appears, merely to go away again to find George. It is a relief to see the two of them at once, if only to dispel the dreadful notion that George is Marthe and Marthe a sinister manifestation of George.

It is a gratifying thing to record, too, that all these people are perfectly willing that I should see the show as well. Katia, commanded by Madame, resigns the best chair, sulks a moment on one leg, and then forgets her annoyance in the thunder of the guns booming from the Greek warships in the roadstead. I forge my way through and find a stranger in the corner of my balcony.

For a moment I am in the grip of that elusive yet impenetrable spirit of benevolent antipathy which is the main cause of the Englishman's reputation for icy coldness toward those to whom he has not been introduced. Now you can either break ice or melt it; but the best way is to let the real human being, whom you can see through the cold blue transparencies, thaw himself out, as he will in time. Very few foreigners give us time. They jump on the ice with both feet. They attempt to be breezy

and English, and leave us aghast at their inconceivable fatuity. While we are struggling within our deliquescent armour, and on the very point of escaping into the warm sunlight of genial conversation, they freeze us solid again with some frightful banality or racial solecism. The reader will perceive from this that the Englishman is not having such a pleasant time in the world as some people imagine.

However, the stranger on my balcony turns out to be, not a foreigner, but another Englishman, which is an even worse trial to some of us. He is, of course, smoking a cigarette. He wears an old straw hat, an old linen suit, and his boots are slightly burst at the sides. His moustache and scanty hair are iron gray. His eyes are pale blue. While he talks they remain fixed upon Cordelio, which is on the other side of the gulf. No doubt, if he were talking in Cordelio, they would be fixed upon Smyrna. He wears a plain gold wedding-ring. His clothes are stylish, which is not to say they are new. They might have been worn by a wealthy Englishman abroad, say nine or ten years ago. No Greek tailor, for example, would hole all those buttons on the cuffs, nor would he make the coat-collar "lay" with such glovelike contiguity to the shoulders. Also, the trousers hang as Greek trousers never hang, in spite of their bagginess at the knees.

Keeping a watchful eye upon Cordelio, he bends toward me as I sit in my chair, and apologizes for

the intrusion. Somehow the phrase seems homelike. Greeks, for example, never "intrude": they come in, generally bringing a powerful whiff of garlic with them, and go out again, unregretted. They do not admit an intrusion. Even my friend Kaspar Dring, *Stab-Ober-Leutnant* attached to the defunct Imperial German Consulate, would scarcely appreciate the fine subtlety implied in apologizing for an intrusion. It may be that so gay a personality cannot conceive a psychological condition which his undefeated optimism would fail to illuminate. And so, when the stranger, who is, I imagine, on the verge of forty, murmurs his apology for his intrusion, I postulate for him a past emerging from the muzzy-minded ideals of the English middle class. He adds that, in fact, he had made a mistake in the number of the room. Quite thought this was number seventy-seven, which was, I might know, the official residence of the Bolivian vice-consul, a great friend of his. Had arranged to see the affair from the Bolivian vice-consul's balcony. However, it didn't matter now, so long as I didn't mind—What? Of course, I knew what was going on. There! There he is, just stepping out of the launch. That's Skaramapopulos shaking hands with him now. English, eh? Just look at him! By Jove! who can beat us, eh? And just look at that upholstered old pork-butcher, with his eighteen medals and crosses, and never saw active service in his life.

Too busy making his percentage on—What? No, not him—he's been asleep all his life. Oh, it was a game! However, now *he's* come, we may get something like order into the country. Did I mind if he took a few notes?

I did not mind. I tipped a member of the Callipoliton family off one of the other chairs, and begged my new friend to sit down. I fetched my binoculars and examined the scene below, where a famous British general stood, with his tan-gloved hand at the salute beside his formidable monocle, and was introduced to the Greek general, the French admiral, the Italian captain, and the British lieutenant. "A cavalryman," I muttered, as he started off down the line of Greek troops, hand at the salute, the sun gleaming on his brown harness and shining spurs. The Greek band was playing "See the Conquering Hero Comes," very much off the key, and it almost seemed as if the tune was too much for the conquering hero himself, for he dived suddenly into a motor-car and moved rapidly away. Whereupon the band took breath and began to form fours, the yellowish green lines of troops coagulated into oblong clots, the motor cars, with their little flags, whooped and snarled at the crowds swarming, from the cafés and side streets, and the quay began to assume its wonted appearance (from above) of a disorganized ant-heap.

And my balcony began also to thin out. The

Callipoliton faction dwindled to Madame, who was established on a chair at the other end, elbow on the rail, contemplating Mount Sipylus like a disillusioned sybil. Katia bounced back for a moment to inquire, in a piercing treble, whether my baggage was ready, and if so, should George descend with it to the entrance hall?

I informed her that, if George was really bursting to do something useful, he could go ahead and do as she said.

She bounced away, and later the baggage was found down below; but I am inclined to believe that George sublet the contract to the Armenian boots and merely took a rake-off. George is built on those lines.

"So you are a reporter," I remarked to my friend, eyeing the mangy-looking note book he was returning to his pocket.

"Oh, yes," he assured me, adding hastily, though I had made no comment, "I'm getting on very well, too."

He didn't look it, but I let that pass. You can never tell these millionaires nowadays. I thought I was safe in asking what paper he worked for.

"I've an article in to-day's *Mercure de Smyrne*. You've seen it, I suppose?"

I hadn't. I'd never even heard of it. I had read the *Levant*, the *Independent*, the *Matin*, the *Orient*, and so forth; but the *Mercure* was a new one.

It came out of his pocket like a shot—a single sheet with three columns on each side, three fourths of the back occupied by an insurance company's ad.

"This is mine," he informed me, laying a finger on a couple of paragraphs signed "Bijou."

The article was entitled, "*Les Bas de Soie*," and was in the boulevardese style dear to the Parisian journalist.

"You write French easily?" I said, quite unable to keep down my envy.

He waved his cigarette.

"Just the same as English," he assured me. "Italian and Spanish also."

"Then for the love of Michael Angelo why do you stop here in this part of the world? You might make your thousands a year on a big paper as a special commission. Why don't you go home?"

III

WELL, he told me why he didn't go home, though not in so many words. If the reader will turn back to the beginning, he will see some reflections upon the behaviour of men under emotional shock and stress. It is possible he may have already turned back, wondering what those remarks portended, what it was all about anyway. Well——

It seems that Mr. Satterley Thwaiteson (I quote his card, which he pressed upon me) had been in the Levant some time. He had had a very pleasant

probation as articled pupil to an architect in Norwich—did I know it?—and had made quite a hobby of studying French architecture, in his own time, of course. Used to take his autumn vacation in northern France, visiting the abbeys and ruins and so forth. Got quite a facility, for an Englishman, in the language. Perhaps it was because of this that, when he had been in a Bloomsbury architect's office for a year or so, and a clerk of works was needed for a Protestant church which some society was erecting in Anatolia, he, Satterley Thwaiteson, got the job. "Secured the appointment," were his exact words, but I imagine he meant, really, that he got the job. He came out, on one of the Pappayanni boats—did I know them?—and as far as I could gather, got his church up without any part of it falling down before the consecration service. Which, considering the Levantine contractor's conceptions of probity, was a wonder.

So far Mr. Satterley Thwaiteson's history seemed simple enough. Like many others of his imperial race, he had gone abroad and had added to the prestige of the English name by erecting a Protestant church in a country where Protestants are as plentiful as pineapples in Labrador. But—and here seems to be the joint in the stick—he didn't go home. All the time regarding Cordelio across the gulf with his pale-blue eyes, an expression of extraordinary pride and pleasure comes over his features,

and banishes for a few moments the more permanent indication of a man who had lost the art of life. Extraordinary pride and pleasure! He didn't go home. Never did go home. It is obvious that the memory of this emotional treachery to the call of home is something to be treasured as one of the great things in life. No, on the contrary, he got married out here. Yes, a foreigner, too—a Roumanian. And they didn't get married in his wonderful Protestant church either, for she was a Roman Catholic. "Here's a photo of her as she was then."

He takes from his pocket an old wallet stuffed with folded letters, and fishes out a small flat oval frame that opens on a hinge. There are two portraits, photos coloured like miniatures. One is the Mr. Satterley Thwaiteson of that day fifteen or sixteen years ago, not so different save as to the hair, of which there is not much at present. But the woman is beautiful. In these days of high-tension fiction, when novelists, like the Greek in one of Aristophanes's plays, walk about, each with his string of lovely female slaves, it is tame enough to say a woman is beautiful. And perhaps it would be better to say that this woman in the little coloured photo was startling. The bronze hair piled high, the broad fair brow, the square indomitable chin, the pallor contrasting with the heavily lashed brown eyes, the exquisite lips, all formed a combination which must have had a rather curious effect upon

the studious young man from Norwich *via* Bloomsbury. Filled him with pride for one thing, or he wouldn't be showing this picture to a stranger.

But what struck me about that girl's picture, even before he fished out a picture postcard photo of his family taken a month or two ago, was something in her face which can be expressed only by the word rapacity. Not, be it noted, a vampire. If the truth were known, there are very few vampires about, outside of high-tension fiction. But I saw rapacity, and it seemed a curious thing to find in a woman who, it transpired, had married him and borne him children, eight in all, and had made him so happy that he had never gone home.

For that was what had aged him and paralyzed him and kept him there until he was a shabby failure—happiness. That was what brought to his face that expression of extraordinary pride and pleasure. As I listened to his tale I wondered, and at the back of my mind, on the big shadowy stage of which I spoke, there seemed to be something going on which he forgot to mention. And when he showed me, with tender pride, the picture-postcard photo of his wife and her eight children, I could not get rid of the notion that there was something rapacious about her. Even now she was handsome, in a stout and domineering kind of way. It was absurd to accuse such a woman of rapacity. Was she not a pearl? Everything a woman should

do, she had done. She had been fruitful, she had been a good mother, a virtuous wife, and her husband assumed an expression of extraordinary pride and pleasure when he showed a stranger her portrait. His happiness in her was so rounded and complete that he would never have another thought away from her. He would never go to England again. Was not this marvellous?

As I pondered upon the marvel of it, I heard him telling me how he had found some difficulty in making a living out of the few architectural commissions which happened along, and gradually fell into the habit of giving lessons in English to Greeks and Armenians who were anxious to achieve social distinction. And when the war came, and he was shut up with everybody else in the city, he had to depend entirely upon the language lessons. And then, of course, he "wrote for the press" as well, as he had shown me. He was very successful, he thought, taking everything into consideration. Why, he would get three pounds Turkish (about four dollars) for that little thing. Always signed himself "Bijou." His wife liked it. It was her name for him when they were lovers. And though, of course, the teaching was hard work, for Armenian girls were inconceivably thick-headed, and sometimes it occupied him twelve or fourteen hours a day, yet it paid and he was happy.

And in the very middle of my irritation at him

for harping on what he called happiness, I saw that I was right, after all: that girl had been rapacious. She had devoured his personality, fed on it, destroyed it, and had grown stout and virtuous upon it. His hair was thin and gray, he had a hunted and dilapidated look, and his boots were slightly burst at the sides. And he was happy. He had abandoned his profession, and he toiled like a packhorse for the bare necessities; yet he was happy. He was proud. It was plain he believed his position among men was to be gauged by his having won his peerless woman. He rambled on about local animosities and politics, and it was forced upon me that he would not do for a great newspaper. He would have to go away and find out how the people of the world thought and felt about things, and I was sure he would never consent to do that. His wife would not like it. And he might not be happy.

It is evening, and the sun, setting behind Cordelio shines straight through my room and along the great dusty corridor beyond. In the distance can be seen those antiphonal personalities, Marthe and George, in harmony at last, waiting to waylay me for a tip. On the balcony is the mother of all the Callipolitons, elbow on the rail, contemplating Mount Sipylus like some shrewd sybil who has found out the worthlessness of most of the secrets of the gods.

When I have packed an attaché case, I am ready. The destroyer on which I am to travel to Constantinople is signalling the flagship. In an hour she will depart. I go out once more on the balcony, to contemplate for the last time the familiar scene. The roadstead sparkles in the sun and the distant waters are aflame. The immense heave of the mountain-ranges is purple and ruddy gold, and in the distance I can see white houses in quiet valleys above the gray-green of the olive grounds. There is one in particular, among great cypresses, and I turn the binoculars upon it for a brief sentimental moment. As I return the glasses to the case, Madame regards me with attention.

"*Vous partez ce soir, monsieur?*" she murmurs.

And I nod, wondering why one can detect nothing of rapacity in her rather tired face. "*Oui, madame, je pars pour Constantinople ce soir,*" I assure her, thinking to engage her in conversation.

So far, in spite of our propinquity and the vociferous curiosity of Kataia, we have not spoken together to any extent.

"*Et après?*"

"*Après, madame, je vais à Malte, Marseille, Paris, et Londres. Peut-être, à l'Amérique aussi—je ne sais pas.*"

"*Mon Dieu!*" She seems quietly shocked at the levity of a man who prances about the world like this. Then comes the inevitable query: "*Vous*

êtes marié, monsieur?" and the inevitable reply, "*Pas encore.*"

She abandons Mount Sipylus for a while and turns on the chair, one high-heeled and rather slatternly shoe tapping on the marble flags. "*Mais dîtes moi, monsieur; vous avez une amante de cœur, sans doute?*"

"*Vous croyez ça? Pourquoi?*"

She shrugs her shoulders.

"*N'importe. C'est vrai. Vous êtes triste.*"

"*Oui. Mais c'est la guerre.*"

She was silent a moment, observing later that I was a philosopher, which was flattering but irrelevant. And then she said something that I carried away with me, as the destroyer fled over the dark waters of the Ægean.

"*Oui, c'est la guerre, mais il faut que vous n'oubliez, monsieur, que chaque voyage est un petit mort.*"

I left her there, looking out across the hard blue glitter of the gulf, when I went down to go aboard.

THE SHINING HOUR

THE destroyer, driven by her three powerful turbines, moves forward in a series of long vibrant lunges. As she careens in each of her rhythmical pauses, there mingles with the interminable hum of her revolving motors the complaining sough and hiss of the white spume flying from her high-flaring forecastle, and overflowing with a dazzling commotion the opaque blue of the heaving sea. Far forward, in the shadows beneath that same forecastle, screened from light and weather, and the flat white tops of their saucy caps catching the pale glow of a dirty electric globe, sit several bluejackets, the blue-gray smoke of their cigarettes vanishing like strips of impalpable gauze overside. On the bridge a solitary gleaming figure in oilskins and peaked hat maintains itself in equilibrium with the intelligent precision of a motionless pendulum. Nearer, the torpedoes in the sinister hooded tubes strain slightly at their lashings between the huge squat cowls, with their wired orifices, which lead to the forced-draft fans of the bright, clean, silent stokeholds. The three short and flattened funnels are raked, so that, viewed from astern they have an air of haughty and indomitable endurance,

like that of a man driving a team at furious speed and leaning back in derision. And from their throats pour torrents of hot gases visible only by the tremulous agitation of the atmosphere to leeward. At intervals, as the slim ovalled stern rises higher than usual, the sunlight glints on the bronze hand-wheels of the after gun and gives a delicate sheen to the green-painted depth-charges in their cradles by the rail. And there is an ominous roar from the white effervescence below, a roar which dies away immediately the stern subsides, and one can see again the emerald and jade and cream of the wake stretching like a floating ribbon to the limits of vision.

And as we proceed, to use a naval euphemism for any adjustment of position, whether carried out at one knot or one hundred, the scene through which we are passing changes with the fabulous disregard of rational probabilities which is experienced in dreams. The islands of the Ægean seem to be playing, as in mythological times, some ponderous and mysterious game. They come and go. They execute protean transformations of outline and chameleon changes of lustre and hue. As we speed westward the sun behind Olympos seems, like King Charles, an unconscionable time dying: and then, as the course is changed to the northeastward he drops with disconcerting suddenness and a polychromatic splash into a transfigured ocean. And a staid and re-

spectable cargo-boat, doing her twelve knots perhaps, heaves into clear view, slides past, and vanishes with the indecent haste of a funeral reproduced on the cinematograph.

Such is life at thirty-five knots.

On such an occasion, too, as has been described, a benevolent and keen-eyed aviator, had he been passing overhead, might have seen, huddled upon the after deck of the destroyer, a figure in naval uniform with his oilskins up to his ears, keeping a watchful eye upon a khaki-colored sea-bag and a couple of battered suitcases which threatened at every swing to come adrift and slide over the smooth linoleum-covered deck into the sea. And being familiar with that part of the world and the naval habits pertaining thereto, this aviator would have surmised that the figure would be, very likely, a Lieutenant of Reserve on his way home, who had been granted a passage on a destroyer to enable him to join another warship which would consent to take him to Malta.

And his surmise would have been perfectly correct.

But what this benevolent aviator would not have divined as he swept over and on, and ultimately picked up his next landmark, which was Mount Athos, would be that the Lieutenant of Reserve had made a vow to write an article before he got home, and that he was feeling depressed at the extreme unlikelihood of his ever doing so if his transit

was to be conducted seated on a bronze scuttle and holding on to his worldly possessions as they slipped and swayed.

Another thing the aviator would never have guessed was that this Lieutenant of Reserve, addicted as he was to literature, had never been able to take it seriously. It was almost as if he and literature had had a most fascinating intrigue for a good many years yet he had always refused to marry her! He had never been able to settle down day after day to a hum-drum, ding-dong battle with a manuscript, every week seeing another batch finished and off to the printers: a steady, working journeyman of letters. He had heard of such people. He had read interviews with eminent votaries of this sort of thing and had taken their statements (uttered without the flicker of an eyelash) with a grain of salt. He had always been ready with a perfectly valid reason which excused his own failure to do such things. He was a Lieutenant of Reserve and it was impossible, with the daily duties and grave responsibilities of such a position, to concentrate upon anything else.

All nonsense, of course, as any one who has seen a Lieutenant of Reserve at work could tell you. Besides, it is well known that men at the front wrote poems "under fire," that army officers sat amid shot and shell and calmly dictated best sellers. It is equally well known that, with practice, any naval officer of average intelligence can be educated to fire

a fifteen-inch gun with one hand and write a *villanelle* with the other. As for aviators, they may be said not only to "lisp in numbers" as was said of Pope, but they take as many flights of fancy as they do over the lines. So there is no real reason for a mere Lieutenant of Reserve failing to turn out a monotonously regular ten thousand words a day, let us say, except his own laziness and incapacity. And this particular Lieutenant of Reserve felt this in his heart; and so, as soon as the cares of office fell from his shoulders he vowed a vow that each day he would do a regular whack at this proposed article, that each day he would improve the shining hour.

Moreover, and above all, there was the great example of Anthony Trollope. Possibly the reader has heard of that eminent best seller of a past age, whom nothing could dismay. For Trollope's chief claim to the pop-eyed reverence of posterity seems to be that he reduced writing to the methodical precision of a carpenter planing a board. His slogan was not "art for art's sake," or "quality not quantity," or anything like that at all. It was not even that ancient piece of twaddle, "*nulla dies sine linea.*" It was: "a page every quarter of an hour." For years the Lieutenant of Reserve had been haunted by the picture evoked by that simple phrase—the picture of a big beefy person with mutton-chop whiskers and a quill pen, sitting squarely at a table with a clock before him; and four times every hour would be

heard the hiss of a sheet torn off and flung aside and a fresh one begun. It is no good arguing that they didn't use writing blocks in those days. A man who worked his brain by the clock would no doubt invent a tear-off pad for his own use. I have seen him, in nightmares, and heard the hiss. And nothing could stop him. At sea he was just the same. The ship might roll, the waves run mountains high, sailors get themselves washed off and drowned, engines break down, boiler-furnaces collapse and propeller-shafts carry away—*n'importe.* Wedged into his seat in the cabin Trollope drove steadily on. Every fifteen minutes, *click!* another page finished. If a chapter happened to be completed, half way down a page, he did not stop. On! on! not even when a novel was finished did he waste any time. He took a fresh sheet of paper perhaps (with a steady glance at the clock) and went right on at the next one.

There was something heroic about this, one feels, but there is an uneasy feeling at the back of one's mind that the man had mistaken his vocation. Why did he do it? Had he a frightful vision of a public at its last gasp for lack of nourishing fiction, and so toiled on with undiminished ardour, hour after hour, day after day? Had he committed some dark and desperate crime, and so was seeking to do penance by thus immolating himself upon the altar of unremitting labour? Otherwise, why did he do it? For the theory that he liked doing it or that it was a

perfectly natural thing for an author to do, is untenable. There is a story that he did not believe very much in inspiration, or rather that he did not believe in waiting for it; and one is bound to admit that his novels seem to prove it. But if a man does not believe in waiting for inspiration, what is his idea in writing at all? It is like a man saying that he does not believe in waiting for love, that one woman is very much like another as far as he is concerned, that those who express finical preferences are not serious citizens concerned only with keeping up the birthrate. . . .

Nevertheless it must be admitted that the Trollopian tradition has its fascinations for those who, having some turn for writing, are preoccupied more with the fact of achievement than the fun of the thing. The great point, they feel, is to get it *done* (and paid for). They compose direct on to a typewriter, it is rumoured, and even employ a secretary to take it down. And when the shift is over, one supposes they go away and play golf. No doubt in time the secretary is able to cope with the work unaided. It is difficult to see why not.

To the Lieutenant of Reserve, however, these considerations were not of much importance. This humdrum method of intensive quantity-production might destroy the soul if persisted in for years. He had no such intention. He merely wished to see whether it could be carried on for a short while.

And when he and his baggage were tumbled off the destroyer into a picket-boat and carried aboard of a sloop-of-war bound for Malta, he began to nerve himself for the trial. The time had come, he felt, to improve the shining hour.

For of course, with that curious self-deception that seems to give an air of unreality to everything an author says to himself, he was quite sure he knew what it was he had to write. Quite sure. It was to be an article of, say three or four thousand words. There was to be no nonsense about "getting stuck" in the middle of it, or changing it into something else and making it longer. He would write it in his bunk, pad propped up on knee, for there is always too much noise in these ward-rooms with the gramophone in one corner, the paymaster's typewriter going in another, and half a dozen men playing cards in between. And smiling a little, he requested a mess-rating to show him his cabin.

A sloop, the uninitiated may be informed, is not a vessel primarily designed to encourage the production of literature. She is, on the contrary, a slender, two-funnelled, wasp-waisted affair of undeniable usefulness during what were known as "hostilities." She is subdivided into minute spaces by steel bulkheads with dished and battened rubber-jointed doors. The ordinary pathways of humanity are encumbered by innumerable wheels, plugs, pipes, wires, extension rods, and screwed down

hatchways. And when it became necessary to send home Lieutenants of Reserve and many other ranks and ratings, so that a grateful country might pay them off and leave them to shift for themselves, the Navy found it increasingly difficult to find passages for them, and decided to go into the passenger business itself. And the world having been made perfectly safe for democracy, it was felt that anything savouring of comfort would be out of place in their ships. The stern, iron-bound and rock-ribbed veterans who were coming home would scorn the soft delights of a wire mattress or shaving glass. These ammunition-chambers, for example, are the very thing. Fix 'em up. And in a few hours four bunks would be fitted up in a space about the size of an ordinary office strong room. There is neither light nor ventilation; but no matter. Give 'em a couple of electrics. They're only here for a few days anyhow.

And here we are! There are three other Lieutenants of Reserve in the other three bunks and the conversation is general. The gentleman below me, who is smoking strong Turkish cigarettes, has just come down from the Black Sea where he has been employed resuscitating a temporarily defunct Russian cruiser. Some job, he avers. The Russians may be great idealists and artists; they may even have a knack at the ballet and show us a thing or two about novel-writing, but they are out of their ele-

ment as sailormen. You cannot navigate a ship with the wild, free movement of the figures in a Bakst design. You must cultivate a different attitude toward material forces in an engine room that is adumbrated in modern Russian fiction. This is corroborated by Mr. Top-Bunk on the other side. Fine job they'd given him, a respectable engineer. Did we know Novorossisk at all? Yes, we chimed, we'd loaded grain there in the old days. Up the River Bug, wasn't it? Yep. Well, a place not so far up, Ekaterin-something. They'd mussed up the electric-power plant. We had to get it going again. To begin with, these idealists, these makers of a new and happier world, had let the boilers go short of water, had brought down the furnace-crowns and started a good many stays. Also they had cut a good deal of indispensable copper away from the switchboard and, presumably, sold it. Or perhaps they were merely putting their theories into practice and dividing up the plant among the community. However, it didn't signify, because while we were making up our plans, on the boat, and trying to figure out how much of the original wreckage would come in again, one of the local enthusiasts felt he couldn't wait any longer for the Millennium and flung an armful of hand grenades through the shattered windows of the power house. We could imagine what happened among those dynamos and turbine cases.

Mr. Lower-Bunk on the other side doesn't say

much except that he'd been mine-sweeping. He says very little all the way to Malta. Sweepers very rarely have much to say. They have a habit of quiet reticence, engendered by the curious life they lead, a life balanced on the very knife-edge of disaster. They generally get gray over the ears and their movements are deliberate and cautious, after the manner of men who dwell in the presence of high explosives. It occurs to me suddenly that these men are all about to vanish, to disappear from public view, and we shall have no record of their spiritual adventures during the last few years. In a month or so at most they will have doffed their naval uniforms and (much to their relief) put on civilian garb once more. I say we shall have no record of their spiritual adventures. We have tales of their doings as heroes, no doubt; but that is not the same thing. I suppose, if the truth be told, a good many of them had no adventures of this description. A surgeon with whom I sailed, a dry satirical person of exceptional mental powers, once enunciated to me a particularly brutal theory to account for this gap in our literature. Just as, he asserted, just as below a certain stage in the animal kingdom the nervous system becomes so rudimentary and mechanical that pain as we know it is non-existent, so, below a certain social level in civilized life the emotions are largely an instinctive response to unconscious stimuli applied to actual cases.

This mine-sweeping Lieutenant of Reserve for example, who lives in a diminutive brick subdivision of a long edifice in a long road a long way out of Cardiff, and who enjoys having his tea in the kitchen with his coat off and the cat on his knee, according to my surgical friend, is unable to comprehend within himself the emotions inspired by the fine arts, by great literature, or by great beauty. Now this seemed to me unfair, and I adduced as an argument the fact that these people often appreciated fine literature. Nothing could have been more unfortunate! I had delivered myself into his hands. He simply asked me how I knew. By what method of calibration were we to gauge the ability of these people to appreciate anything of the sort? Did I ever hear these people *talking* about books, or art, or beauty? I was silent, and he went on as though he enjoyed it. Reading, he informed me, was no evidence whatever. Reading the written characters in a printed book implied no comprehension of the moods inspiring the book. Universal education had taught these people to go through the various external mental processes and no doubt the words did convey some rough-and-ready meaning to their minds, just as a monkey who has been taught to ride a bicycle had some sort of crude conception of momentum and equilibrium. But as for actually entering into the full intention of the artist, why, look at the books they generally read, look at the pictures they preferred, look (and

here I got up and walked away) at the women they married!

I mention this surgeon because I met him again in Malta. After four days of ceaseless and intolerable rolling, pitching, and shaking, during which I calculated, Trollope would have written a novel and a half, but which added not a word to my article, we raised Malta, and passing under the great guns of the fortifications, anchored in the Grand Harbour of Valletta. And I met him in the Strada Reale. Sooner or later one meets every man one has ever sailed with in the Strada Reale. The paymaster who was so rude to you about an advance of pay in Scapa Flow, the airman who cleaned you out at poker at Saloniki, the engineer who tried to borrow from you in Bizerta, the senior naval officer who refused you leave in Suez—you will encounter them all sooner or later in the Strada Reale. And after I had deposited my baggage in one of the vaulted chambers which pass for bedrooms within the enormous walls of the Angleterre, on the Strada St. Lucia, we adjourned to the great square in front of the Libreria and sat at a little table.

And the thought that comes to me as we sit at the little table—just out of the stream of cheerful people who pour up and down the Strada Reale and seem to have no other occupation, and in the shadow of the great honey-coloured walls of the Governor's Palace—is that the Surgeon will not only prevent

my getting on with my article but will probably adduce half a dozen excellent reasons why it should not be written. He has a thin chilly smile which is amusing enough in the ward room but which acts like a blight upon one's inspiration. He is not satisfied with proving that everything has been done. He goes on to show conclusively that it wasn't worth doing, anyway. The tender shoots of fancy, the delicate flowers of thought, perish in the icy wind of his mentality. The fact is, it is not necessary for him to confess that he has never written a line, couldn't write a line, and never intends to write a line. It sticks out all over. He lacks that naïveté, that soft spot in his brain, that shy simplicity, which brackets the artist with the tramp, the child, and the village idiot. He is "all there" as we say, and one must not be afraid to confess that an artist is very rarely "all there." I do not offer this explanation to him, of course. His enjoyment of it would be too offensive. And when I tell him of my misgivings about Trollope, the smile irradiates his thin intellectual features. He fails to see why a man shouldn't work at writing precisely the same as he works at anything else. "If he's to get anything done," he adds.

"But don't you see," I argue weakly, "the artist isn't particularly keen on getting a thing done, as you call it? He gets his pleasure out of doing it, playing with it, fooling with it, if you like. The

mere completion of it is an incident. Can't you see?"

But he couldn't. These efficient people never can see a thing like that. They mutter "amateur," and light a fresh cigar. They are like first-class passengers on a liner—bright, well-dressed, well-mannered, and accomplished people, being carried, they know not how, across a dark and mysterious world of heaving waters. They can explain everything without knowing much about anything. They are the idle rich of the intellectual world. They——

"What did you say was the title of that article you were going to write?" asked the Surgeon.

"Well," I said slowly, "I *was* going to call it 'The Shining Hour,' but I don't know if after all. . . . "

"Well, why don't you get on with it then?" he inquired, and he snickered. "It sounds all right," he added, and finished his Italian vermouth. "Have another. It may give you an idea!"

KNIGHTS AND TURCOPOLIERS

THE cruiser, coming to anchor with a sudden rattle of cable and grind of rapidly revolving wheels, found us ready to disembark. Leaving our baggage in heaps upon scuttles and gratings, we poured down the gangway and tumbled into the competing dinghies which swarmed about us. In this evolution there was to be observed no trace of the traditional eagerness of sentimental travellers to meet the first authentic impact of a place. The formularies of clearing from the ship's mess, the disentanglement of baggage, and the mollification of ward-room ratings had engrossed our faculties during arrival. Even as the boat approached the high flat platform of the Customs Quay, and the immediate noises and odours of the Harbour Side assailed us, we remained preoccupied with the exigencies of our naval obligations. We saw, that is to say, nothing. We moved hurriedly across the Quay, climbed into diminutive carriages and were driven, with much cracking of whips and display of Latin temperament, up into the town, like so many prisoners. . . .

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And he came out of the Strada Mezzodi running, shoulders back, gloves and cane held bosom-high in his clenched fists, like an athlete's corks, the whole body of the man pulsing and glowing from the ascent of that precipitous slot. Came out into the Strada Reale and brought up against me with a squashing thump that left us limp and uncertain of the future.

He took off his cap and mopped his swiftly sloping forehead with the heel of his hand, an original and unforgettable gesture. There he was, unchanged and unchangeable, a knotty sliver of England, exactly the same, save for the Naval Reserve Uniform, as when, some nine years before, I had seen him barging his way into the shipping office in North Shields to sign off articles, for he was going away home to Newcastle to get married. There he was, ready-witted as ever, for he demanded with incredible rapidity of utterance what the hell I thought I was doing, and recognized me even as he asked. He was, for all his doe-skin uniform and characteristically shabby lace and gloves, the same scornful, black browed, hook-nosed truculent personality. Small, yet filling the picture like bigger men by reason of his plunging restlessness, his disconcerting circumlocution of body, he vibrated before me even now an incarnate figure of interrogation. He found breath and voice, and shook my hand in a limp lifeless fashion that conveyed an uncanny impression of it being his first timorous experiment in handshaking—an-

other peculiar and paradoxical by-product of his personality. He turned me round and propelled me back along the Strada Reale. He said the man I wanted to see at the Base Office was away playing polo and I could see him in the morning. He asked where my baggage was, and when I told him he said the Regina was the worst hotel in town and there was a room vacant next to his in the Angleterre. He turned me suddenly into the entrance hall of a vast structure of stone where in the cool darkness diminished humans sat in tiny chairs and read the news-telegrams at microscopic notice-boards. An ornate inscription informed me that this place had been the Auberge of the Knights of the Tongue of Provence, but he said it was the Union Club. He examined a row of pigeon-holes and took out some letters. We sallied forth into the afternoon sunlight again and he hurried me along toward the Piazza de San Giorgio. A captain and two commanders passed and I saluted, but my companion spun round a corner into the declivity called the Strada San Lucia, and muttered that his salutes were all over and done with. Scandalized, yet suspecting in my unregenerate heart that here lay a tale that might be told in the twilight, I made no reply. Another turn into the fitly-named Strada Stretta, no more than a congregation of stone staircases largely monopolized by children, and goats with colossal udders and jingling bells, and we hurtled into the

archway of an enormous mediæval building whose iron gate shut upon us with a clang like a new-oiled postern.

And as we ascended the winding stone stairs there came down to us a medley of persons and impressions. There were far gongs and musical cries pierced with a thin continuous whine. There was a piratical creature with fierce eyes and an alarming shock of upstanding black hair, who wielded a mop and stared with voracious curiosity. There came bounding down upon us a boy of eleven or so, with brown hair, a freckled nose, and beautiful gray eyes. There descended a buxom woman of thirty, modest and capable to the eye, yet with a sort of tarnish of sorrowful experience in her demeanour. And behind her, walking abreast and in step, three astounding apparitions, Russian guardsmen, in complete regalia, blue and purple and bright gold so fabulous that one stumbled and grew afraid. Mincingly they descended, in step, their close-shaven polls glistening, their small eyes and thin, long legs giving them the air of something dreamed, bizarre adumbrations of an order gone down in ruin and secret butchery to a strangled silence.

A high, deep, narrow gothic doorway on a landing stood open and we edged through.

I had many questions to ask. I was reasonably entitled to know, for example, the charges for these baronial halls and gigantic refectories. I had a legi-

timate curiosity concerning the superb beings who dwelt, no doubt, in mediaeval throne-rooms in distant wings of the château. And above all I was wishful to learn the recent history of Mr. Eustace Heatly, sometime second engineer of the old *S. S. Dolores*, late engineer-lieutenant, and now before my eyes tearing off his coat and vest and pants, and bent double over a long black coffin-like steel chest whence he drew a suit of undeniable tweeds. But it was only when he had abolished the last remaining trace of naval garniture by substituting a cerise poplin cravat for the black affair worn in memory of the late Lord Nelson, and a pair of brown brogues for the puritanical mess boots of recent years, that Heatly turned to where I sat on the bed and looked searchingly at me from under his high-arched, semicircular black eyebrows.

He was extraordinarily unlike a naval officer now. Indeed, he was unlike the accepted Englishman. He had one of those perplexing personalities which are as indigenous to England as the Pennine Range and the Yorkshire Wolds, as authentic as Stonehenge; yet by virtue of their very perplexity have a difficulty in getting into literature. There was nothing of the tall blond silent Englishman about this man at all. Yet there was probably no mingling of foreign blood in him since Phœnician times—he was entirely and utterly English. He can be found in no other land and yet is to be found in all

lands, generally with a concession from the government and a turbulent band of assistants. His sloping simian forehead was growing bald, and it gleamed as he came over to where I sat. His jaws, blue from the razor creased as he drew back his chin and began his inevitable movement of the shoulders which preluded speech. He was English, and he was on the point of proving his racial affinity beyond all cavil.

"But why get yourself demobilized out here?" I demanded, when he had explained. "Is there a job to be had?"

"Job!" he echoed, eyebrows raised as he looked over his shoulder with apparent animosity. "Job! There s a *fortune* out here! See this?" He dived over the bed to where lay his uniform and extracted from the breast-pocket a folded sheet of gray paper. Inside was a large roughly pencilled tracing of the eastern Mediterranean. There was practically no nomenclature. An empty Italy kicked at an equally vacuous Sicily. Red blobs marked ports. The seas were spattered with figures, as in a chart, marking soundings. And laid out in straggling lines like radiating constellations, were green and yellow and violet crosses. From Genoa to Marseilles, from Marseilles to Oran, from Port Said and Alexandria to Cape Bon, from Saloniki to Taranto, these polychromatic clusters looped and clotted in the sea-lanes, until the eye, roving at last toward the intricate con-

figuration of the Cyclades, caught sight of the Sea of Marmora, where the green symbols formed a closely woven texture.

"Where did you get this?" I asked, amazed, and Heatly smoothed the crackling paper as it lay between us on the bed. His shoulders worked and his chin drew back, as though he were about to spring upon me.

"That's telling," he grunted. "The point is: do you want to come in on this? These green ones y'understand, are soft things, in less'n ten fathom. The yellows are deeper. The others are too big or too deep for us."

"Who's us?" I asked, beginning to feel an interest beyond his own personality. He began to fold up the chart, which had no doubt come by unfrequented ways from official *dossiers*.

"There's the Skipper and the Mate and meself," he informed me, "but we can do with another engineer. Come in with us!" he ejaculated "It's the chance of a lifetime. You put up five hundred, and it's share and share alike."

I had to explain, of course, that what he suggested was quite impossible. I was not demobilized. I had to join a ship in dock-yard hands. Moreover, I had no five hundred to put up. He did not press the point. It seemed to me that he had simply been the temporary vehicle of an obscure wave of sentiment. We had been shipmates in the old days. He

had never been a friend of mine, it must be understood. We had wrangled and snarled at each other over hot and dirty work, we had gone our separate ways ashore, and he had rushed from the shipping office that day in Shields and never even said goodbye ere he caught the train to Newcastle and matrimony. Yet here now, after nine years, he abruptly offered me a fortune! The slow inexorable passage of time had worn away the ephemeral *scoria* of our relations and laid bare an unexpected vein of durable esteem. Even now, as I say, he did not press the point. He was loth to admit any emotion beyond a gruff solicitude for my financial aggrandisement. And while we were bickering amiably on these lines the high narrow door opened and the buxom woman appeared with a tea-tray. She smiled and went over to the embrasured window where there stood a table. As she stood there, in her neat black dress and white apron, her dark hair drawn in smooth convolutions about her placid brows, her eyes declined upon the apparatus on the tray, she had the air of demure sophistication and sainted worldliness to be found in lady prioresses and mother superiors when dealing with secular aliens. She was an intriguing anomaly in this stronghold of ancient and militant celibates. The glamour of her individual illusion survived even the introduction that followed.

"This is Emma," said Heatly as though indicating a natural but amusing feature of the landscape.

"Emma, an old shipmate o' mine. Let him have that room next to this. Anybody been?"

"Yes," said Emma in a soft, gentle voice. "Captain Gosnell rang up. He wants to see you at the usual place."

"Then I'll be going," said Heatly, drinking tea standing, a trick abhorred to those who regard teas as something of a ritual. "Lay for four at our table to-night and send to the Regina for my friend's gear. And mind, no games!" And he placed his arm about her waist. Seizing a rakish-looking deer-stalker, he made for the door and then halted abruptly, looking back upon us with apparent malevolence. Emma smiled without resigning her pose of sorrowful experience, and the late engineer-lieutenant slipped through the door and was gone.

So there were to be no games. I looked at Emma and stepped over to help myself to tea. There were to be no games. Comely as she was, there was no more likelihood of selecting the cloistral Emma for trivial gallantry than of pulling the Admiral's nose. I had other designs on Emma. I had noted the relations of those two with attention and it was patent to me that Emma would tell me a good deal more about Heatly than Heatly knew about himself. Heatly was that sort of man. He would be a problem of enigmatic opacity to men, and a crystal-clear solution to the cool, disillusioned matron.

And Emma told. Women are not only implacable

realists, they are unconscious artists. They dwell always in the Palace of Unpalatable Truth and never by any chance is there a magic talisman to save them from their destiny. Speech is their ultimate need. We exist for them only in so far as we can be described. As the incarnate travesties of a mystical ideal we inspire ecstasies of romantic supposition. There is a rapt expression on the features of a woman telling about a man. Duty and pleasure melt into one suffusing emotion and earth holds for her no holier achievement.

And so, as the reader is ready enough to believe, there were no games. Apart from her common urbane humanity, Emma's lot in life, as the deserted wife of a Highland sergeant lacking in emotional stability, had endowed her with the smooth efficiency of a character in a novel. She credited me with a complete inventory of normal virtues and experiences and proceeded to increase my knowledge of life.

And the point of her story, as I gathered, was this. My friend Heatly, in the course of the years, had completed the cycle of existence without in any degree losing the interest of women. I knew he was married. Emma informed me that they had seven children. The youngest had been born six months before. Where? Why in the house in Gateshead of course. Did I know Gateshead?

I did. As I sat in that embrasured window and

looked down the thin deep slit of the Strada Lucia, past green and saffron balconies and jutting shrines, to where the Harbour of Marsamuscetta showed a patch of solid dark blue below the distant perfection of Sliema, I thought of Gateshead, with the piercing East Coast wind ravening along its gray dirty streets, with its frowsy fringe of coal-staiths standing black and stark above the icy river, and I heard the grind and yammer of the grimy street-cars striving to drown the harsh boom and crash from the great yards at Elswick on the far bank. I saw myself again hurrying along in the rain, a tired young man in overalls, making hurried purchases of gear and tobacco and rough gray blankets, for the ship sailed on the turn of the tide. And I found it easy to see the small two-story house half way down one of those incredibly ignoble streets, the rain, driven by the cruel wind, whipping against sidewalk and window, the front garden a mere puddle of mud, and indoors a harassed dogged woman fighting her way to the day's end while a horde of robust children romped and gorged and blubbered around her.

"Seven," I murmured, and the bells of a herd of goats made a musical commotion in the street below.

"Seven," said Emma, refilling my cup.

"And he's not going home yet, even though he has got out of the Navy," I observed with tactful abstraction.

"That's just it," said Emma, "not going home. He's gone into this salvage business you see. I believe it's a very good thing."

"Of course his wife gets her half pay," I mused.

"She gets all his *pay*," accented Emma. "He sends it all. He has other ways . . . you understand. Resources. But he won't go home. You know, there's somebody here."

So here we were coming to it. It had been dawning on me, as I stared down at the blue of the Marsamuscetta, that possibly Heatly's interest for Emma had been heightened by the fact that he was a widower. Nothing so crude as that, however. Something much more interesting to the high gods. Between maturity and second childhood, if events are propitious, men come to a period of augmented curiosity fortified by a vague sense of duties accomplished. They acquire a conviction that beyond the comfortable and humdrum vales of domestic felicity, where they have lived so long, there lie peaks of ecstasy and mountain ranges of perilous dalliance. I roused suddenly.

"But now he's out of the Navy," I remarked.

"You mustn't think that," said Emma. "He isn't that sort of man. I tell you, she's all right."

"Who? The somebody who's here?"

"No, his wife's all right as far as money goes. But there's no sympathy between them. A man can't go on all his life without sympathy."

"What is she like?" I asked.

"Oh I'm not defending him," said Emma, with her eyes fixed on the sugar-bowl. "Goodness knows *I've* no reason to think well of men, and you're all alike. Only, he's throwing himself away on a—— Well, never mind. You'll see her. Here's your room. You can have this connecting door open if you like."

"Fine," I said, looking round and then walking into a sort of vast and comfortable crypt. The walls, five feet thick, were pierced on opposite sides as for cannon, and one looked instinctively for the inscriptions by prisoners and ribald witticisms by sentries. There was the Strada Lucia again, beyond a delicious green railing; and behind was another recess, from whose shuttered aperture one beheld the hotel courtyard with a giant tree swelling up and almost touching the yellow walls. I looked at the groined roof, the distant white-curtained bed, the cupboards of blackwood, the tiled floor with its old worn mats. I looked out of the window into the street and was startled by an unexpectedly near view of a saint in a blue niche by the window, a saint with a long sneering nose and a supercilious expression as she declined her stony eyes upon the Strada Lucia. I looked across the Strada Lucia and saw dark eyes and disdainful features at magic casements. And I told Emma that I would take the apartment.

"You'll find Mr. Heatly in the Café de la Reine,"

she remarked gently, "he's there with Captain Gosnell."

But I did not want to see either Heatly or Captain Gosnell just yet. I said I would be back to dinner, and took my cap and cane.

The Strada Reale was full. The Strada Reale is always full. It is the one street within the walls of the city where one may promenade. It becomes a ritual, walking up and down the Strada Reale. Or rather it becomes a narcotic. One's individuality becomes blurred. One evolves into a uniformed automaton, nervously alert as to perambulating ranks and ratings, noting with uncanny precision the correctness of one man's sleeve-lace or the set of another's wing-collar. This sort of morbid preoccupation with harness and trappings is inevitable among a host of young men not entirely certain of their social status or of their right to the title of gentility. One can figure, easily enough, how this self-consciousness must have worked among the young blades who came to Malta and dwelt in the monasteries of their orders. Trig young Provençals and Bavarians, truculent Aragonese and close-lipped Yorkshiremen, watching each other's points and accoutrements as they clanked up and down Strada Reale of an evening. So with us; and the busy scene, the officers and men, singly and groups; the prosperous citizens at the doors of their bright little stores; the stray Maltese girl hurrying along in that

enigmatic head-dress of hers; the inevitable thin English lady with a book from the Garrison Library; the party of Japanese naval officers with their set and eternal smile; the crush of bluejackets surging up and deploying hastily to one side into taverns with names inherited from Nelson's day; the sun setting in lusty splendour beyond the great carved gateway at the upper end—all this may be taken for granted by the reader as we pass by subtler ways to the ramp leading up to the Lower Barracca. Here, sitting in the little circular garden above the bastions, we look down on the world.

It was up here, smoking in solitary comfort and looking out toward Senglea and beyond, where towns and villages dotted the great golden plain, that I got hold of the notion that this divagation of Heatly was his peculiarly English way of responding to the invading beauty of his environment. I began to suspect the avowed spiritual motives of those old knights and turcopoliers who steadfastly refused to return to their native lands, who remained within the order, or who set forth on fantastic quests in the domains of the Paynims. I could perceive, looking down at the cobalt sea, the honey-coloured promontories, the severe line of columned porticoes of the Bighi Hospital, and the romantic riot of clear colours in roofs and walls, that a reaction from a dour north-country asceticism might be conceded. I suspected that this revulsion, suddenly precipitated

in a man's heart by a celibate existence in scenes of sun-ripened loveliness, might account for many strange episodes in history. Emma, full of sorrowful experience, yet brooding over a man as though he were a child of her own, was another manifestation of nature's compensating contrivance. A sudden curiosity assailed me. What if my theory were true, that the exquisite beauty of this honey-coloured island of the sea had some sort of radio-activity, as it were, driving men to noble deeds of high endeavour and women to greater charity? And walking down again in the dusk, while the city and the harbour decked themselves out in necklaces and girdles and tiaras of many-coloured jewels, I realized that Heatly, in cold fact, was doubtful material out of which to fashion a hero. This brought on a struggle, between heredity and environment as it were. It was necessary to recall, with an effort, the house at Gateshead, the seven children, and the tired woman toiling all day and far into the night. With the war won and the country saved from invading hordes, her husband deserts her. Once in the town again, however, and climbing toward the Piazza San Giorgio, it no longer required an effort to concentrate upon the deserted wife. A hasty retrospect confirmed the suspicion that wives invariably flourish when deserted; that it is the deserting male, the reckless idealist rushing about the world seeking a non-existent felicity, who often ends in disaster. That

—and this came to mind as the Libreria was reached, and I searched under the arches for a view of Heatly—that the wives who are not deserted, but who have to feed and clothe and comfort and scold and advise, are the true objects of commiseration; wives whose existence is given over to a ceaseless vigil of cantankerous affection. And then I saw Heatly and the suspicion was confirmed.

He was seated at a table with two other men, in the shadow of one of the great columns. Just behind him a young Maltese kneeled by a great long-haired goat, which he was milking swiftly into a glass for a near-by customer. Heatly, however, was not drinking milk. He was talking. There were three of them and their heads were together over the drinks on the little marble table. They were so absorbed that I sat down to watch them from a distance.

Through the corridor of the arcades poured a stream of promenaders from the side alleys and augmented each moment by groups from the Strada Reale. The great bells of the Cathedral began to boom, and a military band in front of the Garrison was playing a march that came to us in vague shrill whimpers and deadened thumps on a drum. A flock of goats filed by, tinkling their bells with an air of absurd vanity. Beggars materialized in a disconcerting manner from nowhere, and remained motionless with extended palms. Waiters, holding

aloft trays in miraculous equilibrium, glided among the crowded tables in the square or shot at express speed into the café. A party of priests sat just within the door, emblems of respectable conviviality. Families grew modestly riotous over their grenadine and cakes, and children ran shrieking into the Square to play touch or follow-my-leader round the statue of Queen Victoria.

All this was going on and the three men at the little marble table took no notice at all. As I watched them, the man next to Heatly, whom I guessed to be Captain Gosnell, turned his head and stared round vacantly at the scene. Yet it was evident he had in no way retired from the intense intimacy of the conversation, for he immediately looked sharply at the others and nodded. There was about these men an aura of supreme happiness. As they regarded each other their eyeballs took on the benevolent and preoccupied opacity of sculptured bronze. For all their easy civilian garb they conveyed the impression of a gathering of proconsuls or knight-commanders of outlying protectorates. In the light of a match-flare, as they lit fresh cigarettes, their features showed up harsh and masculine, the faces of men who dealt neither in ideas nor in emotions, but in prejudices and instincts and desires. They were entirely of the world in which they lived. Between them and reality there came no troubling thoughts, no fantastic dreams of art, philosophy,

or religion. That is why, one suspects, they conveyed the impression of truculent and exclusive happiness. For them the gay scene, the dignified and frumpish statue of royalty, the enormous wall of the Governor's Palace with its sculptured and variegated corbels, the peremptory strains of the military band, the delicate sky with its faint yet brilliant stars, were all merely accessories to their personal well-being. Into this galaxy of acceptable facts I was abruptly initiated, for Heatly turned and saw me, and further contemplation was out of the question.

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And of that evening and the tale they told me, there is no record by the alert psychologist. There is a roseate glamour over a confusion of memories. There are recollections of exalted emotions and unparalleled eloquence. We traversed vast distances and returned safely, arm in arm. We were the generals of famous campaigns, the heroes of colossal achievements and the conquerors of proud and beautiful women. From the swaying platforms of the Fourth Dimension we caught glimpses of starry destinies. We stood on the shoulders of the lesser gods to see our enemies confounded. And out of the mist and fume of the evening emerged a shadowy legend of the sea.

By a legerdemain which seemed timely and agree-

ably inexplicable the marble table under the arcade of the Libreria became a linen-covered table in an immense and lofty chamber. We were at dinner. The ceiling was gilded framework of panelled paintings. Looking down upon us from afar were well-fed anchorites and buxom saints. Their faces gleamed from out of a dark polished obscurity and their ivory arms emerged from the convolutions of ruby and turquoise velvet draperies. Tall candelabra supported coloured globes which shed a mellow radiance upon the glitter of silver and crystal. There was a sound of music which rose and fell as some distant door swung to and fro; the air still trembled with the pulsing reverberations of a great gong; and a thin whine, which was the food-elevator ascending in dry grooves from the kitchen, seemed to spur the fleet-footed waiters to a frenzy of service. High cabinets of darkwood stood between tall, narrow windows, housing collections of sumptuous plates and gilded wares. On side tables heaps of bread and fruit made great masses of solid colour, of gamboge, saffron, and tawny orange. Long-necked bottles appeared reclining luxuriously in wicker cradles, like philosophic pagans about to bleed to death. At a table by the distant door sits the little boy with the freckled nose and beautiful gray eyes. He writes in a large book as the waiters pause on tip-toe, dishes held as though in votive offering to a red Chinese dragon on the mantel above the boy's

head. He writes, and looking out down the entrance suddenly laughs in glee. From the corridor come whoops and a staccato cackle of laughter followed by a portentous roll of thunder from the great gong. The boy puts his hand over his mouth in his ecstasy, the waiters grin as they hasten, the head waiter moves over from the windows thinking seriously, and one has a vision of Emma, mildly distraught, at the door. Captain Gosnell, holding up the corner of his serviette, remarks that they are coming, and studies the wine-list.

They rush in, and a monocled major at a near-by table pauses, fork in air over his fried sea-trout, and glares. In the forefront of the bizarre procession comes Heatly, with a Russian guardsman on his back. The other two guardsmen follow, dancing a stately measure, revolving with rhythmic gravity. Behind, waltzing alone, is Mr. Marks, the mate. Instantly, however, the play is over. They break away, the guardsman slips to the floor, and they all assume a demeanour of impenetrable reserve as they walk decorously toward us. They sit, and become merged in the collective mood of the chamber. Yet one has a distinct impression of a sudden glimpse into another world—as though the thin yet durable membrane of existence had split open a little, and one saw, for a single moment, men as they really are.

And while I am preoccupied with this fancy, which is mysteriously collated in the mind with a

salmis of quails, Captain Gosnell becomes articulate. He is explaining something to me. It is time Captain Gosnell should be described. He sits on my left, a portly powerful man with a large red nose and great baggy pouches under his stern eyes. It is he who tells the story. I watch him as he dissects his quail. Of his own volition he tells me he has twice swallowed the anchor. And here he is, still on the job. Did he say twice? Three times counting——; well, it was this way. First of all, an aunt left him a little money and he quit a second mate's job to start a small provision store. Failed. Had to go to sea again. Then he married. Wife had a little money, so they started again. Prospered. Two stores, both doing well. Two counters, I am to understand. Canned goods, wines, and spirits on one side; meats and so forth on the other. High-class clientèle. Wonderful head for business, Mrs. Gosnell's. He himself, understand, not so dusty. Had a way with customers. Could sell pork in a synagogue, as the saying is. And then Mrs. Gosnell died. Great shock to him, of course, and took all the heart out of him. Buried her and went back to sea. She was insured, and later, with what little money he had, started an agency for carpet-sweeping machinery. Found it difficult to get on with his captain you see, being a senior man in a junior billet. As I very likely am aware, standing rigging makes poor running gear. Was doing a very decent little

business too, when—the war. So he went into the Naval Reserve. That's how it all came about. Now, his idea is to go back, with the experience he has gained, and start a store again. Merchandising in his opinion, is the thing of the future. With a little money, the thing can be done. Well!

It is difficult to see the exact bearing all this autobiography has upon the officers at the next table. Never mind. Listen. Captain Gosnell repeats his statement that he entered the Naval Reserve. Well. Don't forget the war had done for his little business. His own personality was the principal good-will in that. And now the war was over, what was there in it for him? Second Mate's billet! No fear! Not again. However! So he got finally into the mine-laying. No particular picnic for a man his age, you understand, but it had to be done by responsible people or they would never get the eggs laid. That was his expression, which seemed to me, in the light of his revelations, to deserve a smile. Er, well, yes. From force of habit he used a phrase from the provision business. Could I imagine him with a white apron tied high up under his arm-pits? That was his idea. Everything white. White enamel, glazed tiles, one of those revolving cutter machines for ham, and a cash register finished in Sheraton or Chippendale—eh what?

But it was necessary to have a little capital. Say five thousand. So here we were.

A bad attack of pneumonia with gastritis nearly finished him at Dover. Doctor said if he got away to a warmer climate it would make a new man of him. So a chat with a Surgeon-Commander in London resulted in him being appointed to a mine-layer bound for the eastern Mediterranean. Perhaps I had heard of her. The *Ouzel*. Side-wheeler built for the excursionists. Started away from Devonport and took her to Port Said. Imagine it! Think of her bouncing from one mountainous wave to another, off Finisterre. Think of her turning over and over, almost, going round St. Vincent. Fine little craft for all that. Heatly here was Chief. Marks here was Mate. It was a serious responsibility.

At this Mr. Heatly interjects a bitter reflection upon the coupling bolts of the paddle-shaft. Snapped like carrots, one or two a day. And only a couple of flat-footed dockyard men to keep watches. Still, he snarled, they all helped. Gosnell here, up to his eyes in it, fetching and carrying, swinging the big hammer like a sportsman and doing exactly what he was told.

Captain Gosnell, with his flushed severe features quite unmoved by this revelation of his efficiency, and his stern eyes fixed upon his roast partridge, proceeded with his story.

And when they reached Port Said, they were immediately loaded with mines and sent straight out again to join the others who were laying a com-

plicated barrage about fifty miles north. Four days out, one day in. It wasn't so bad at first, being one of a company, with constant signalling and visits in fine weather. But later, when the *Ouzel* floated alone in an immense blue circle of sea and sky, they began to get acquainted. This took the common English method of discovering, one by one, each other's weaknesses, and brooding over them in secret. What held them together most firmly appears to have been a sort of sophisticated avoidance of women. Not in so many words, Captain Gosnell assures me, but taking it for granted, they found a common ground in "Keeping in the fairway." Marks was a bachelor it is true, but Marks had no intention of being anything else. Marks had other fish to fry, I am to understand.

I look at Marks, who sits opposite to me. He has a full round face, clean-shaved and flexible as an actor's. His rich brown hair, a thick solid-looking auburn thatch, suddenly impresses me with its extreme incongruity. As I look at him he puts up his hand, pushes his hair slowly up over his forehead like a cap, revealing a pink scalp, rolls the whole contrivance from side to side and brings it back to its normal position.

More for comfort than anything else, Captain Gosnell assures me, for nobody is deceived by a wig like that. What is a man to do when he has pretty near the whole top of his head blown off by a gas-

ometer on the western front exploding? There's Marks, minus his hair and everything else, pretty well, buried in a pit of loose cinders. Lamp-post blown over, lying across him. Marks lay quiet enough, thinking. He wasn't dead, he could breathe, and one hand moved easily in the cinders. Began to paddle with that hand. Went on thinking and paddling. Soon he could move the other hand. Head knocking against the lamp-post, he paddled downward. Found he was moving slowly forward. Head clear of the lamp-post. Gritty work, swimming, as it were, in loose ashes. Hands in shocking condition. Scalp painful. Lost his hair but kept his head. Suddenly his industriously paddling hands swirled into the air, jerking legs drove him upward, and he spewed the abrasive element from his lips. He had come back. And had brought an idea with him. Before he went into the Army, Marks was second officer in the Marchioness Line, afflicted with dreams of inventing unsinkable ships and collapsible lifeboats. Now he came back to life with a brand new notion. What was it? Well, we'd be having a run over to the ship by and bye and I would see it. It could do everything except sing a comic song.

"And now I'm going to tell you," said Captain Gosnell, pushing away the *Glace Napolitaine* and selecting several stalks of celery to eat with his cheese. Quite apart from the mellowing process

which has been going on since five o'clock, Captain Gosnell is fully equipped for telling anything. He has the gift of recounting experiences, real and imaginary, which is quite a different thing from eloquence or rhetorical power. His mentality is of that objective type which is entirely unaware of self-consciousness. He is alive at all times to the fantastic whimsies which are for ever playing across the minds of coarse, common men. He perceives the humour of the situation, the intrinsic value of the adventure as he tells it.

"We had been relieved one evening," he observes, "and were about hull down and under when I ordered 'Dead slow' for a few hours. The reason for this was that at full speed we would reach Port Said about three in the afternoon, and it was generally advised to arrive after sunset or even after dark. I set a course to pass round to the east'ard of a field we had laid a week or so before, instead of to the westward. This is a simple enough matter of running off the correct distance, for the current, if anything, increased the margin of safety. We were making about four knots, with the mine-field on the starboard bow, as I calculated, and we were enjoying a very pleasant supper in my cabin, which had been the passenger saloon in the *Ouzel's* excursion days, a fine large room on the upper deck with big windows, like a house ashore. The old bus was chugging along and from my table you could see the horizon

all round except just astern which was hid by the funnel. Nothing there however but good salt water and the Holy Land a long way behind. It was like sitting in a conservatory. The sea was as smooth as glass, with a fine haze to the southward. This haze, as far as I could judge, was moving north at about the same speed as we were going south, which would make it eight knots, and in an hour we would be in it. I mention this because it explains why the three of us, sitting in a cabin on an upper deck, saw the battleship, all together, all at once, and quite near. We all went on the bridge.

"Everybody else, apparently, saw her too. You couldn't very well help it. The guns were on her and our one signalman was standing by his halyards. The idea in everybody's head of course was the *Goeben*. The *Goeben* was a sort of nightmare in those days. Our mine-fields were partly designed to get the *Goeben*. Supposing she did come out, and supposing she had the luck to get past the Grecian Arches, she could pound Port Said to pieces and block the canal with sunk ships before anything big enough to hurt her could get within five hundred miles of us. And she could get away again, with her speed. The *Goeben* used to give our people a sinking feeling in the pit of the stomach, I can tell you.

"But this wasn't the *Goeben*. That ship was as well-known to us as the *Victory* at Portsmouth or

the London Monument. This thing coming straight out from Port Said was a vessel with three enormous funnels standing straight, huge masts like factory chimneys, with square fighting-tops. The haze magnified her, you understand, and to us in that wooden tub of an *Ouzel*, she seemed larger than any ship we had ever heard of.

"Now you must understand," went on Captain Gosnell, "that the subject of conversation between us while we were at supper was money. We were discussing the best way of getting hold of money and the absolute necessity of capital after the war if we were to get anywhere. This war, you know, has been a three-ringed circus for the young fellows. But to men like us it hasn't been anything of the sort. We have a very strong conviction that some of us are going to feel the draft. We aren't so young as we used to be, and a little money would be a blessing. Well, we were talking about our chances; of salvage, prize-money, bonuses, and so forth. Our principal notion, if I remember that evening, was to go into business and pool our resources. For one thing, we wanted to keep up the association. And then out of the Lord knows where came this great gray warship heading straight——"

Captain Gosnell paused and regarded me with an austere glance. Mr. Marks and Heatly were listening and looking at us watchfully. And over Mr. Marks's shoulder I could see the three officers with

their polychromatic uniforms gleaming in the soft orange radiance of shaded lamps. One was leaning over and examining the contents of an ice-bucket beside him. Another, the green-and-gold one, was cracking walnuts. The third sat back, smiling, his gorgeously laced sleeve extended to where he twiddled a wine-glass.

"You understand what I mean?" said Captain Gosnell, reaching for a cigarette. "Or perhaps you don't. We stood on the bridge watching that ship come up on us, watching her through our glasses, and we did not attach any particular importance to her appearance. A couple of shells from her eighteen-pounders would have sunk us. When we saw the Russian ensign astern it did not mean a great deal to us. She was as much an anomaly in those terrible waters as a line-of-battle ship of Nelson's day. That was what staggered us. What use was she? An enormous, valuable ship like that coming out into such a sea. Suddenly the value of her, the money she cost, the money she was worth, so near and yet so far, came home to us. I had an imaginary view of her, you understand, for a moment as something I could sell; a sort of fanciful picture of her possibilities in the junk line. Think of the brass and rubber alone, in a ship like that! And then we all simultaneously realized just what was happening. I think I had my hand stretched out to the whistle lanyard when there was a heavy, bubbling grunt, and

she rolled over toward us as though some invisible hand had given her a push. She rolled back to an even keel and began pitching a very little. This was due, I believe, to the sudden going astern of her engines coupled with the mine throwing her over. Pitched a little, and for some extraordinary reason her forward twelve-inch guns were rapidly elevated as though some insane gunner was going to take a shot at the North Star before going down. From what we gathered, later, there were things going on inside that turret which are unpleasant to think about. I'll tell you. But first of all, there was that ship, twenty-five thousand tons of her, going through a number of peculiar evolutions. Like most battleships she had four anchors in her bows, and suddenly they all shot out their hawse-pipes and fell into the sea, while clouds of red dust came away, as though she was breathing fire and smoke at us through her nostrils. Very vivid impression we had of that. And then she began to swing round on them, so that as we came up to her she showed us her great rounded armoured counter with its captain's gallery and a little white awning to keep off the sun. And what we saw then passed anything in my experience on this earth, ashore or afloat. We were coming up on her, you know, and we had our glasses so that as the stern swung on us we had a perfectly close view of that gallery. There were two bearded men sitting there in uniforms covered with gold lace and dangling

decorations, smoking cigarettes, each in a large wicker chair on either side of a table. Behind them the big armoured doors were open and the mahogany slides drawn back and we could see silver and china and very elaborate electrical fittings shining on the table, and men in white coats walking about without any anxiety at all. On the stern was a great golden two-headed eagle and a name in their peculiar wrong-way-round lettering which Serge told us later was *Fontanka.* And they sat there, those two men with gray beards on their breasts like large bibs, smoking and chatting and pointing out the *Ouzel* to each other. It was incredible. And in the cabin behind them servants went round and round, and a lamp was burning in front of a large picture of the Virgin in a glittering frame. I can assure you their placid demeanour almost paralyzed us. We began to wonder if we hadn't dreamed what had gone before, if we weren't still dreaming. But she continued to swing and we continued to come up on her, so that soon we had a view along her decks again and we knew well enough we weren't dreaming very much.

"For those decks were alive with men. They moved continually, replacing each other like a mass of insects on a beam. It appeared, from where we were, a cable's length or so, like an orderly panic. There must have been five or six hundred of them climbing, running, walking, pushing, pulling, like one of those football matches at the big schools

where everybody plays at once. And then our whistle blew. I give you my word I did it quite unconsciously, in my excitement. If it had been Gabriel's trumpet it could not have caused greater consternation. I think a good many of them thought it *was* Gabriel's trumpet. It amounted to that almost, for the *Fontanka* took a sort of slide forward at that moment and sank several feet by the head. All those hundreds of men mounted the rails and put up their hands and shouted. It was the most horrible thing. They stood there, with uplifted hands and their boats half-lowered and shouted. I believe they imagined that I was going alongside to take them off. But I had no such intention. The *Ouzel's* sponsons would have been smashed, her paddles wrecked, and we would probably have gone to the bottom along with them. We looked at each other and shouted in sheer fury at their folly. We bawled and made motions to lower their boats. I put the helm over and moved off a little and ordered our own boat down. The fog was coming up and the sun was going down. The only thing that was calm was the sea. It was like a lake. Suddenly several of the *Fontanka's* boats almost dropped into the water and the men began to slide down the falls like strings of blue and white beads. She took another slide, very slow, but very sickening to see. I fixed my glasses on the superstructure between the funnels where a large steel crane curved

over a couple of launches with polished brass funnels. And I was simply appalled to find a woman sitting in one of the launches with her arms round a little boy. She was quite composed, apparently, and was watching three men who were working very hard about the crane. The launch began to rise in the air and two of the men climbed into her. She rose and the crane swung outward. We cheered like maniacs when she floated. In a flash the other man was climbing up the curve of the crane and we saw him slide down the wire into the launch.

"You wouldn't believe," said Captain Gosnell, rolling his napkin into a ball and dropping it beside his plate, "how it heartened us to see a thing done like that, clean and complete. There was even smoke coming out of the brass funnel. No doubt the launch had been in use in Port Said an hour or two before, and the fire was still in her. She moved, very slowly, away from the ship's side, and the woman sat there with her arms round the little boy, surrounded by large trunks and bags, exactly as though she were disembarking at Plymouth or Southampton, say.

"By this time, you must understand, the other boats were full of men, and one of them was cast off while men were sliding down the falls. They held on with one hand and waved the other at the men above, who proceeded in a very systematic way to slide on top of them and then the whole bunch would

carry away altogether and vanish with a sort of compound splash. And then men began to come out of side scuttles. They were in a great hurry, those chaps. A head would appear and then shoulders and arms working violently. The man would be just getting his knees in a purchase on the scuttle frame when he would shoot clean out head first into the sea. And another head, the head of the man who had pushed him, would come out.

"But don't forget," warned Captain Gosnell, as we rose and began to walk toward the door, "don't forget that all these things were happening at once, within the space of, roughly, a minute. Don't forget the *Fontanka* was still swarming with men, that the sun was just disappearing, very red, in the west, that the ship's bows were about level with the water, and that for all anybody knew the two bearded officers were still sitting in their little gallery finishing their drinks. Don't forget all this," urged Captain Gosnell, and he paused outside an open door through which the others had passed. "And then, when you've got that all firmly fixed in your mind, she turns right over, shows the great red belly of her for perhaps twenty seconds, and sinks."

Captain Gosnell held the match for a moment longer to his cigar, threw the stick on the floor and strode into the room, leaving me to imagine the thing he had described.

It was an immense room, even for that building of immense rooms. Three great beds stood in a row between two high windows, beds with mosquito screens like brailed-up mainsails depending from spars above them. Broad beams of rough-hewn timber supported the roof. There were tables and chairs and lounges in distant corners, writing cabinets, and clothes-presses with doors like the front portals of imposing mansions. There was a piano, at which one of the officers in uniform was playing while Heatly danced with an imaginary partner. Mr. Marks, with a just appraisal of the dimensional peculiarities of the apartment, had drawn a golf-stick from a bag hanging from a cornice and was carefully putting a ball of twine into an imaginary hole in the centre of the carpet. And behind me came Emma in her demure evening attire of black and white, bearing a tray with small glasses.

There is something to be said for the method adopted in some foreign military services of corroborating introductions by standing rigidly at attention and announcing one's own name in a loud, clear voice. Our English way of murmuring "Meet Mr. m-m-m," is far from perfect. There was nothing ceremonious in the demeanour of those three gentlemen in spite of their splendour of attire. One was inevitably afflicted with a suspicion that the cerise breeches, the blue tunics, and glossy russia-leather hessians were no more than properties hired

for an evening masquerade. Out of the tunics came sinewy necks surmounted by features stamped with austere experiences and shadowed by character matured against odds of fortune and numbers and circumstances. Their frivolity was obviously the holiday mood engendered by their temporary sojourn in this fabulous isle of golden sunlight and honey-coloured towns and ultramarine harbours. They were as incongruous as Heatly and his friends. They moved about in that vast and ancient chamber like the fantastic figures of a romantic opera. The uniforms, the music, the liquors, became blended into a species of confusing and delightful languor. An elysium from which one looked down upon harsh continents of reality and saw the drama of sudden death upon calm seas red with the setting sun.

And these three, in their deftly handled and slow-moving launch, with their incredible passengers, the woman with her arms round a little boy, were the first to board the *Ouzel*. Captain Gosnell had stopped his engines, for the sea was thick with swimming and floating men. They explained through Serge, who had climbed down the crane—a man of extended experience in polar regions—that they were officers in the Imperial Russian Army entrusted with the safe conduct of the lady and her child, and therefore claimed precedence over naval ratings. That was all very well, of course; but the naval rat-

ings were already swarming up the low fenders of the *Ouzel*, climbing the paddle boxes and making excellent use of the ropes and slings flung to them by the *Ouzel's* crew. The naval ratings were displaying the utmost activity on their own account, immediately manned the launch, and set off to garner the occupants of rafts and gratings. Even in her excursion days the *Ouzel* had never had so many passengers. Captain Gosnell would never have believed, if he hadn't seen it, that five hundred odd souls could have found room to breathe on her decks and in her alleyways, all dripping sea-water. Captain Gosnell, leaning back on the maroon velvet settee and drawing at his cigar, nodded toward the talented Serge, who was now playing an intricate version of "Tipperary," with many arpeggios, and remarked that he had to use him as an interpreter. The senior naval officer saved was a gentleman who came aboard in his shirt and drawers and a gold wrist-watch, having slipped off his clothes on the bridge before jumping; but he spoke no English. Serge spoke "pretty good English." Serge interpreted excellently. Having seen the lady and her little boy, who had gray eyes and a freckled nose, installed in the main cabin, he drew the Captain aside and explained to him the supreme importance of securing the exact position of the foundered ship, "in case it was found possible to raise her."

"We had a short conversation," said the Captain

to me, "and from what he told me, I gathered his real reasons for wanting the position. There was no difficulty about that. We had a chart of the mine-field. The next thing was to get to Port Said. It was an impossible situation for long. We literally had to climb over Russian sailors whenever we moved.

"And when we got in, and transferred the men to hospital and I had made my report, they gave me no information to speak of about the ship. I don't think they were very clear themselves what she was to do, beyond making for the Adriatic. As for the passengers, they never mentioned them at all, so of course I held my tongue and drew my conclusions. Serge told me they had been bound for an Italian port whence his party were to proceed to Paris. Now he would have to arrange passages to Marseilles. He took suites in the Marina Hotel, interviewed agents and banks, hired a motor car, and had uniforms made by the best Greek tailor in the town. We were living at the Marina while ashore, you see, and so it was easy for us to get very friendly. Heatly, there, was soon very friendly with the lady."

I looked at Heatly, who was now amiably disputing the last shot Mr. Marks had made from the tee, and then at Captain Gosnell. The experienced listener lies in wait for this, and if he makes full use of his experience, puts leading questions at once.

"No," said Captain Gosnell with perfect frank-

ness. "Not in the very slightest degree. Nothing of that. If you ask me, I should call it a sort of—chivalry. Anybody who thinks there was ever anything—or—what you suggest—has no conception of the real facts of the case."

This was surprising, even in that phantasmal elysium where we sat enthroned, discussing the actions of the mortals below. It seemed to put Emma in an equivocal position, and my respect for that woman made me reluctant to doubt her intelligence. But Captain Gosnell was in a better position than Emma to give evidence. Captain Gosnell was conscious that a man can run right through the hazards of existence and come out the other side with his fundamental virtues unimpaired. They all shared this sentiment, I gathered, for this lonely woman with the bronze hair and gray eyes; but Heatly's imagination had been touched to an extraordinary degree. In their interminable discussion concerning their future movements, discussions highly technical in their nature, because investigating a sunken armoured warship is a highly technical affair, Heatly would occasionally interject a word emphasizing the importance of giving her a fair deal. They were all agreed. Serge was of the opinion that if they recovered a tenth of the bullion which her husband, who had a platinum concession in the Asiatic Urals, had consigned to his agent in Paris, there would be enough for all. Serge, in

short, became the active spirit of the enterprise. He knew how to obtain funds from mysterious firms who had quiet offices down secluded alleys near Copthall Court and Great St. Helen's in London. He made sketches and explained where the stuff was stowed, and, presuming the ship to be in such and such a position, what bulkheads had to be penetrated to get into her. He obtained permission to accompany the *Ouzel* on her four-day cruises, and they never had a dull moment. He brought water colours along, purchased at immense expense from the local extortioners, and made astonishing drawings of his hosts and their excursion steamer. He sang songs in a voice like a musical snarl, songs in obscure dialects, songs in indecent French, songs in booming Russian. He danced native Russian dances, and the click of his heels was like a pneumatic calking-tool at work on a rush job. His large serious face, with the long finely formed nose, the sensitive mouth, the sad dark eyes suddenly illuminated by a beautiful smile, the innumerable tiny criss-cross corrugations above the cheek-bones which are the marks of life in polar regions, fascinated the Englishmen. Without ever admitting it in so many words, they knew him to be that extremely rare phenomenon, a leader of men on hazardous and lonely quests. Without being at all certain of his name, which was polysyllabic and rather a burden to an Anglo-Saxon larynx, they discovered his character with unerring accuracy.

When the Greek tailor had completed their uniforms according to instructions (and after three years of humdrum khaki and white that Greek tailor almost wept over the commission), and the three Russian officers began to startle Port Said, the three Englishmen remained secure in their convictions. From the very first they seem to have been very conscious of the spiritual aspect of the adventure. They listened to the tittle-tattle of the hotel bars and the Casino dances, and refrained from comment. The scheme grew in their minds and preoccupied them. Mr. Marks and Heatly spent days and nights over strange designs, and Heatly himself worked at the bench in the port alleyway, between the paddle-box and the engine room, constructing perplexing mechanical monstrosities.

Captain Gosnell's method of telling his tale may have had its defects, but it was admirably adapted to the time and the atmosphere. It gave one an opportunity to imagine the scenes, supposing one knew Port Said. And knowing Port Said, that populous spit of sand and scandal, where every European woman has been mercilessly dissected and put together again (all wrong, of course), one inevitably endeavoured to visualize the lonely woman in her hotel suite, with its frail balcony overlooking the crowded Canal, and wondered how she fared at the hands of the coteries at the Saturday night dances at the Casino, or during the post-prandial

drinking in the smoke room of the Eastern Exchange. The little boy would have a great time on the beach, or hunting crabs on the rocks near the De Lesseps statue. It came out, however, that she—for they avoided her formidable surname, referring to her by the pronoun or familiarly as Bionda—only used the motor car and remained slightly indisposed all the time. Their first ship, from Nikolaevsk to Kobe, had been in collision. There was nothing out of the way in a woman keeping secluded after these experiences. Vanished to Cairo and Alexandria and paid lengthy visits to high officials who dwelt in magnificent villas at Ismailia. Her remoteness only sublimated the regard of the men who had saved her. This became clearer, the longer Captain Gosnell talked of that time. And at that time, too, she was remote because she was still supposedly wealthy, beyond their station in life, independent of their solicitude.

But as weeks went by and Serge continued to communicate with Paris and London, it became clear that he was not at all easy in his mind. Some people say, of course, that no Russian is easy in his mind; but this was an altruistic anxiety. He judged it would be best if they were to get on to Paris, where Bionda had relatives and he himself could resume active operations again.

And so they started, this time in a French mail-boat bound for Marseilles. Our three mine-sweepers

saw them off. And Captain Gosnell, as we walked up the Strada Stretta and emerged upon the brilliant Strada Reale, was able to convey a hint of the actual state of affairs.

"She knew nothing," he said. "She was still under the impression that there would always be an endless stream of money coming from somebody in Paris, or London. She was, if you can excuse the word, like a child empress. But there wasn't any such stream. Serge and the others had a little of their own; but hers was mostly in an ammunition chamber on *B* deck in a foundered warship, along with the bullion, bound to the Siberian Bank. She wasn't worrying about money at all. She was wishing she was in Marseilles, for her experiences on ships hadn't given her a very strong confidence in their safety. And Serge was anxious to get her to Paris to her relatives before what money she had ran out.

"But she never reached Marseilles. They were two days off Malta when an Austrian submarine torpedoed the French liner and sank her. They did not fire on the boats. And our lady friend found herself being rowed slowly toward a place of which she had no knowledge whatever. Serge told us they were pulling for eighteen hours before they were picked up."

"And she is here now?" I asked cautiously.

"Here now," said Captain Gosnell. "She usually

comes down here for an hour in the evening. If she's here, I'll introduce you."

We passed across the Piazza Regina, among tables and chairs stacked for the night, for the air was now cold. Within the café we found much cheerful company, for it was a saint's day of some sort and family parties from Cospicua and Civita Vecchia were loth to quit the cakes and wine for the long dark ride home. Some naval gentlemen were gulping their last round of drinks before descending to the Harbour, and a number of seafarers from a freighter, not quite comprehending the sort of hostelry they were patronizing, were making a noise.

She was sitting on a plush lounge at the extreme rear of the café, and when I first set eyes on her I was disappointed. I had imagined something much more magnificent, more alluring, than this. In spite of Captain Gosnell's severely prosaic narrative of concrete facts, he had been unable to keep from me the real inspiration of the whole adventure. I was prepared to murmur, "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?" and so on as far as I could remember of that famous bit of rant. One gets an exalted notion of women who are credited with such powers, who preserve some vestige of the magic that can make men "immortal with a kiss." Bionda, in a large fur coat and broad-brimmed hat of black velvet, had cloaked her divinity, and the first impression was Christian rather

than pagan. "A tired saint," I thought, as I sat down after the introduction and looked at the pale bronze hair and the intelligent gray eyes. She had a very subtle and pretty way of expressing her appreciation of the homage rendered by these diverse masculine personalities. Her hands, emerging from the heavy fur sleeves, were white and extremely thin, with several large rings. She had nothing to say to a stranger, which was natural enough, and I sat in silence watching her. She spoke English with musical deliberation, rolling the r's and hesitating at times in a choice of words, so that one waited with pleasure upon her pauses and divined the rhythm of her thoughts. She preserved in all its admirable completeness that mystery concerning their ultimate purpose in the world which is so essential to women in the society of men. And it was therefore with some surprise that I heard her enunciate with intense feeling, "Oh, never, never, never!" There was an expression of sad finality about it. She was conveying to them her fixed resolve never to board a ship again. Ships had been altogether too much for her. She did not like the sea in any case and rarely visited the Harbour. She had been inland all her life and her recent catastrophes had robbed her of her reserves of fortitude. She would remain here in this island. She sat staring at the marble table as though she saw in imagination the infinite reaches of the ocean—blue, green, gray, or black,

forever fluid and treacherous, a sinister superficies beneath which the bodies and achievements of men disappeared as into some unknown lower region. Women have many valid reasons for hating the sea; this woman seemed dimly aware of a certain jealousy of it—of the alluring masculine element which destroyed men without any aid from women at all. Her faith in ships had not suffered shipwreck so much as foundered. There was no use arguing that the distance to Marseilles was a mere four or five days. If it were only as many hours —never, never, never!

Suddenly she gathered up her gloves and trinkets and said she must be going as it was late. She had worked hard that day and was tired. Would somebody escort her as far as the Strada Mezzodi? We rose, and as if by preconcerted arrangement, divided into two parties. It was the general rule, I gathered, that the gentlemen who had acted as her bodyguard for so long should undertake this nightly duty. We filed out into the deserted square, and the last view we had of them was the small fur-clad figure tripping away up the empty and romantic street while over her towered the three tall soldiers, looking like benevolent brigands in their dark cloaks. As we turned in the other direction, toward the Grand Harbour, Captain Gosnell remarked that they were going down to the ship, and if I cared to come they could show

me something I had probably never seen before. We descended the stone stairs leading to the Customs House Quay. While they conversed in low tones among themselves I turned the matter over in my mind. To see them diving with long strides down those broad shallow steps, the solitary lamps burning before dim shrines high up, lighting their forms as for some religious mystery, they appeared as men plunging in the grip of powerful and diverse emotions. The Captain was plain enough to any intelligence. He desired money that he might maintain his position in England—a country where it is almost better to lose one's soul than one's position. Mr. Marks, beneath the genial falsity of a wig, concealed an implacable fidelity to a mechanical ideal. Heatly, on the other hand, was not so easily analyzed as Emma had suggested. He appeared the inarticulate victim of a remote and magnificent devotion. He gave the impression of a sort of proud irritability that he should have been thus afflicted. There might easily be no remorse in his heart, since he was justified in assuming that a wife with seven children would be simply bewildered if she were made the object of such a romantic extravagance. So far as could be ascertained, he was a little bewildered by it himself.

So we came down to the water, and walked along the quay until we hailed a small, broad-beamed steamer, very brightly lit, yet solitary so that Cap-

tain Gosnell had to use a silver whistle which he carried, and the shrill blast reëchoed from the high ramparts of the Castle of Sant' Angelo. A boat came slowly toward us, showing sharply black against the swaying brightness of the water, and we went aboard. She was a strange blend of expensive untidiness. Great pumps and hoses, costly even when purchased second-hand, lay red and rusty and slathered with dry mud, about her decks. We descended a foul ladder through an iron scuttle leading to the one great hold forward. The 'tween-decks were workshops with lathes, drills, and savage-looking torch-furnaces. Things that looked like lawn mowers afflicted with elephantiasis revealed themselves on inspection as submersible boring-heads and cutters that went down into inaccessible places, like marine ferrets, and did execution there. In the centre, however, suspended from a beam, was the great affair. It would be vain to describe the indescribable. It resembled in a disturbing way a giant spider with its legs curled semicircularly about its body. A formidable domed thing with circular glass eyes set in it and a door as of a safe or the breech-block of a gun. From this protruded a number of odd-looking mechanisms, and below it, flanked by caterpillar belts, on which the contrivance walked with dignity upon the bed of the ocean, were large sharp-bladed cutters, like steel whorls. While I gazed at this, endeavouring to decide how

much was reality and how much merely excited imagination, Mr. Marks went down and proceeded to set a ladder against the side of the machine. He grasped wheels and levers, he spoke with vehemence to Heatly, who ran to a switchboard and encased his head in a kind of listening helmet. Then Mr. Marks climbed nimbly through the aperture and drew the door to with a click. A light appeared within shining through the enormously thick glass and revealing a fantastic travesty of Mr. Marks moving about in his steel prison. Captain Gosnell indicated the triumphant perfection of this thing. They were in constant telephonic connection with him. He could direct a bright beam in any direction and he could animate any one or all of the extraordinary, limbs of the machine. Suppose a ship lay in sand, shale, mud, or gravel. He could dig himself under her, dragging a hawser which could be made fast to a float on each side. He could fasten on to a given portion of the hull, drill it, cut it, and in time crawl inside on the caterpillar feet. He had food, hot and cold drinks, and oxygen for two days. He could sit and read if he liked or talk to the people on the ship. And quite safe, no matter how deep. Wonderful!

I dare say it was. It was a fabulous-looking thing anyhow, and as Mr. Marks, moving like a visible brain in a transparent skull, started and stopped his alarming extremities, it struck me that human-

ity was in danger of transcending itself at last. It was soothing to come up on deck again and see Sant' Angelo in the moonlight like the backcloth of an Italian opera. It was a comfort to hear that one of the men, who ought to have been on duty, was drunk. Perhaps he had found the machinery too powerful for his poor weak human soul and had fled ashore to drown the nightmare of mechanism in liquor. One could imagine the men-at-arms, whose duty it was to watch from those stone towers, in ancient days, slipping out of some newly invented corselet with a jangle and clang, and stealing away in an old leather jerkin only half laced to make a night of it.

Not that there was anything fundamentally at odds with romance in this extraordinary adventure into deep waters, I mused as I lay in my vast chamber that night. Knights in armour, releasing virgin forces of wealth buried in the ocean. Heatly was moving about in the next room, smoking a cigarette.

"What does she do for a living?" I asked. He came and stood in the doorway in his pajamas. He blew a thread of tobacco from his lips.

"She keeps a tea-shop near the Opera House," he said. "We don't go there; knowing her as we do, it wouldn't be the right thing."

"But I can, I suppose," I suggested.

"Yes, you can, I suppose," he assented from somewhere within his room.

"You don't object, of course?" I went on.

The light went out.

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And wedged in between Lanceolottis' music shop and Marcu's emporium of Maltese *bijouterie* I found a modest door and window. In the latter was a simple card with the word TEAS in large print. Below it was a samovar, and a couple of table centres made of the local lace.

It was early afternoon and I was at liberty. The gentleman who had been playing polo the day before was to be seen at his office and he had been good enough to inform me that the ship to which I had been appointed would arrive from Odessa in a few days' time. In the meanwhile I could walk about and amuse myself. This was easy enough. I walked up the Strada Mezzodi and found the window with the card announcing teas. I walked into a room, in which a mezzanine floor had been constructed, with an iron spiral staircase in one corner. The little boy with the gray eyes and the freckled nose came clattering down the stairs and I also observed that in the shadows behind the piled *pâttiserie* the gray eyes of Bionda were upon me.

"Can I go upstairs?" I asked the boy and he smiled and nodded with delightful friendliness.

"Then I will," I said, and he rushed up in front of me. There was nobody there. He cleaned a

table by the low window. Across the street was the broad and beautiful façade of the Opera House. The announcement board bore the legend: *To-night Faust.*

"You want tea?" said the boy, with a forward dart of his head, like an inquisitive bird. I nodded.

"Toast?" I nodded again.

"I thought you were at the hotel," I remarked.

"Only in the evenings," he explained, lifting his tray. "You want cakes, too?" I nodded again and he seemed to approve of my catholic taste. A low voice said, "Karl!" and he hurried down out of sight.

I was sitting there munching a bun and enjoying some really well-made tea (with lemon) and watching a number of cheerful, well-dressed people emerging from the theatre, when something caused me to look round and I saw the face of Bionda just above the floor. She was standing at a turn in the stair regarding me attentively. I rose, and she came on up.

"I thought," she said without raising her eyes, "that I had seen you before. Have you everything you wish?"

"Everything except someone to talk to," I said, and she raised her eyes with a serious expression in them.

"I will talk if you wish," she said gravely.

"Do sit down," I begged. I wished to sit down myself for the window was low. She complied.

"I am a friend of Mr. Heatly's," I went on. Her face lighted up.

"He is a very nice man," she said, laughing. "He likes me very much. He told me he was going to look after me for the rest of my life. He makes me laugh very much. You like him?"

"I used to be on the same ship with him," I said. "Years ago, before he was married."

"Ah, yes, before he was married. I see. Now you go on a ship again?"

"When she arrives from Odessa."

"From ——" she looked hard at me. "Perhaps there will be news, if she comes from Odessa."

"Maybe." She sighed. "You have had no news then, since the Revolution?" I asked.

"Nothing. Not one single word. In there, it is all dark. When your ship comes, there will be passengers, no?"

"Ah, I couldn't say," I replied. "We must wait. If there are any, I will let you know."

"Thank you." Her gaze wandered across the street. "They have finished the play. What do you call when they sing—before?"

"A rehearsal, you mean."

"Yes. Well, they have finished. There is Mephistopheles coming out now." She nodded toward a tall gentleman in tweeds who was smoking a cigarette and swinging a cane on the upper terrace. "He waits for Margarita. There she is." A robust crea-

ture emerged, putting on long gloves, and the two descended to the sidewalk. Bionda laughed.

"Does Margarita usually walk out with Mephisto?" I asked.

"Oh, they are married!" she informed me with a whimsical grimace. "And very happy."

"What are you?" I demanded abruptly. "Not a Slav, I am sure."

"Me? No. I am a Bohemian," she said.

"How appropriate! How exquisitely appropriate!" I murmured.

"From Prag," she added, sighing a little.

"An enemy?" She nodded. "But if you will only consider yourself Czecho-Slovak. . . ." I suggested. She made a gesture of dissent and rose.

"Let me know when your ship comes in," she said, and I promised. Three young naval lieutenants in tennis undress came up the stairs and called for tea. The little boy came up to take their order and I paid him and went out.

Our intimacy increased, of course, as the days passed, and I began to wonder whether or not I, too, was about to pass under the spell and devote my life to the amelioration of her destiny. If my ship went back to Odessa I would be the bearer of messages, an agent of inquiry seeking news of a dim concessionaire in the Siberian Urals. I made extensive promises, chiefly because I was pretty sure my ship would probably go somewhere else, Bizerta

or Tunis. The simple sailor man in time develops a species of simple cunning, to protect himself from being too oppressively exploited. But it is practically impossible to rid a woman of the illusion that she is imposing upon a man. Even Emma thought it well to warn me of my danger. She had heard rumours about that woman. Where had she got the money to start her tea-shop, eh? And when all the officers had gone home, where would she get customers? And so on.

These questions did not preoccupy Bionda herself, however. She was sad, but her sadness was the inevitable result of delightful memories. Her life had been full and animated, and it was only natural, since fate had left her stranded on a pleasant island, that she should indulge her desire for retrospect before rousing to do herself full justice in the new environment. The possibility of regaining the wealth that had been lost did not seem to interest her at all. She never spoke of the expedition of Captain Gosnell and his fellow adventurers. It seemed doubtful at times whether she understood anything at all about it. A shrug and she changed the subject.

And then one day I was stopped by two of the Russian officers as they came down the hotel stairs and they told me they had received their orders at last. They were to report at Paris.

"We sail to-morrow for Marseilles," said one, and his great spur jingled as he stamped his foot to settle

it in the high boot. He stared at me in a puzzled way as though he were not quite sure I was to be trusted with this information, and drew his handkerchief from his sleeve. He had scarcely spoken to me since we had met, and indeed his round head and blank blue eyes had so worried me with the notion that he was a Prussian that I had not regretted his silence. He was rather a shy youth, however, and my fancies were quite unfounded. With considerable difficulty he made known their hope that I would give Madame any assistance in my power when her other friends were gone. I agreed to this with alacrity, since I myself would probably be a thousand miles away in a few weeks' time. And the little boy, Karl. Yes, I would look after him, too. He seemed happy enough, learning the hotel business like a good Bohemian. They shook hands solemnly. The transport was signalled. They were to go on board as soon as she docked.

I could see, what they did not seem so very conscious of, that the whole episode was going to blow up on them. This is the great fact so passionately denied by all romanticists—the mortality of an emotion. And it was the Saturday night before my ship arrived (she came in on Monday evening I remember) that I joined Captain Gosnell and his lieutenants at the Café de la Reine. They were exceedingly yet decorously drunk. They sailed the next morning. They had adjourned to a small ante-room of the

café and through a closed glass door an amused public could obtain glimpses of the orgy. Captain Gosnell's austere features had grown gradually purple, and though he never became incoherent, nor even noisy, it was obvious he had reached another psychic plane. And so there may have been a significance in the grandiose gesture with which he raised a glass of champagne and murmured:

"To Her, whom we all adore, who awaits . . . awaits our return. Our mascot. May she bring us luck."

He sat down and looked in a puzzled way at the empty glass. He gradually drank himself sober and helped me to get the others into a cab. Mr. Marks, his wig over one eye, snored. Heatly began to sing in the clear night:

"*Wide as the world is her Kingdom of power.*"

The cab started. Captain Gosnell waved a dignified farewell. As they turned the corner I heard the high windy voice still singing:

"*In every heart she hath fashioned her throne:*
As Queen of the Earth, she reigneth alone. . . "

And then silence.

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And next morning, after Early Mass, as we walked slowly up the ramp and came to a pause on the ramparts of the Lower Barracca, I was curious to

discover whether this departure of her champions would make any authentic impression upon her spirit. The sea lay in one immense sheet of placid misty blue. Bells boomed from distant belfries and there was a sudden snarl from a bugle down below.

"Suppose," I was saying, "we had a message from Odessa, that your husband had arrived? And suppose he sent for you? Or that he had reached Paris and wanted you there?"

"Oh, yes, I should go, of course. It would be like life again, after being dead."

It was almost as though a lamp had been lit within her. She was transfigured. She smiled as a goddess smiles when men immolate themselves before her. One would have imagined her words had a literal meaning, that she had been dead, and that the very thought which I had expressed was sufficient to galvanize her into glorious life.

This gave me a good deal to think about, and I looked down into the Grand Harbour where a small squat ship with her decks muddy and disreputable was pulling out into the fairway. Here was a fine state of affairs! We were all ghosts to her, phantoms inhabiting another shadowy world cut off from life by an immense, pitiless blue sea. Compared with that distant and possibly defunct concessionaire in the Asiatic Urals, we were all impalpable spectres! Our benevolence had about as much conscious significance for her as the sunlight upon a

plant. I did not speak again until the little steamer, with a croak of her whistle, passed out between the guns of the harbour-mouth and began slowly to recede across the mighty blue floors, a great quantity of foul smoke belching from her funnel and drifting across the rocks. And then I mentioned casually what was happening, that those men were bound upon her affairs, seeking treasure at the bottom of the sea, devoted to an extravagant quest.

And she made no reply. The steamer receded yet farther. It became a black blob on the blue water, a blob from which smoke issued, as though it were a bomb which might explode suddenly with a tremendous detonation, and leave no trace. But Bionda's eyes were not fixed upon the steamer. She was gazing musingly upon the great cannon frowning down from the farther fortress. And after a while she sighed.

"Like life, after being dead," she murmured again.

It was as though she had forgotten us. She was like a departed spirit discontented with the conveniences and society of paradise, who desires to return but dreads the journey. And it became an acute question, whether at any time she had achieved any real grasp of her position. Had she ever realized how she had inspired these men to unsuspected sentiments and released the streams of heroic energy imprisoned in their hearts? Did she suspect even for a moment how she had engaged their interest,

monopolized their time, established herself in defiance of all the rules of life in the midst of their alien affection? Did she know or care how they toiled and suffered, and perhaps sinned, for her? Did she ever imagine herself as she was, resting not upon the inert earth, but reclining in comfort upon the taut and anxious bodies of men?

Or one may put the question this way—Does any woman?

SOME GOOD BUT INSUFFICIENT REASONS FOR SILENCE

THE writer of these notes is a Lieutenant of Reserve in the Royal Navy (unless he has been recently demobilized or dismissed for assailing the Admiralty with gratuitous advice), on service in a vessel cruising along the gloomy and mysterious shores of Anatolia; and it is therefore to be premised that interruptions in the narrative are inevitable from time to time. Indeed, it may very well happen that this article will consist largely of interruptions connected by conscientious attempts to do some "fine writing." This by the way.

[At this point it was found necessary for the writer of these notes to resume his duties as Chief Engineer, orders having been received by wireless to proceed to a prearranged island in the Ægean, to meet His Majesty's battle cruiser *Inevitable* and suckle her with oil-fuel. And while engaged upon this desperate adventure, the writer's mind was led away from the main argument and dwelt for a while upon the probable impression conveyed to the average reader by the phrase "a Lieutenant of Reserve." There is something sombre and forbidding in the very

sound of it, so that one feels there must be tragedy implied. One is reminded of Schomberg, the German hotel-keeper in Conrad's "Victory," who was "supposed" to be "a Lieutenant of Reserve." Conrad himself is ironically magnanimous. So he may have been, he concedes in passing, and leaves Schomberg to get what comfort and credit he can out of his ambiguous status in the Imperial Service. Personally, the writer imagines that Conrad may have misunderstood Schomberg. Any one who has had the melancholy experience of being a Lieutenant of Reserve must entertain doubts whether even a German hotel-keeper would want to brag about it. However, the writer's conscience forbids him to sail under false colours, and he toes the line with Schomberg (who he believes was staying recently at a hotel in Malta and posing as a Swiss automobile salesman) and confesses himself a Lieutenant of Reserve. He is in what is satirically known as "the prime of life," and while not bearing any violent resentment toward the European War which has had four very valuable years of that prime, he sincerely hopes that some small portion of the "freedom" which has been won will be granted to him before old age sets in.]

While entering the lonely and land-locked harbour of the tryst and making fast alongside the towering structure of the *Inevitable*, it is impossible to refrain from wondering what Ulysses would have to say

about a war-galley of thirty thousand tons with eleven hundred men on board. The notion—supposing his spirit to haunt the scenes of his exploits—is not far-fetched. One cannot doubt that he used this harbour during his operations against Troy. His astute intelligence would appreciate the advantages of the treacherous shoal right under the headland at the entrance, and we can imagine him cursing the local Greeks for their frightful charges and incredible stupidity.

[At this point the writer's attention is claimed by the momentous information that the *Inevitable* objects to our oil. Our Chief Officer, in overalls and thick leather gauntlets, is being vituperated by a total stranger, also in overalls and thick leather gauntlets. Each of them waves festoons of litmus paper, wherewith he has been testing the acidity of the oil. What strikes one about the altercation is the deep humanity of it. The stranger is obsessed with a wild and romantic ideal, which is to have his fuel-tanks perennially full of a miraculously perfect oil. The Chief Officer is beset with a profound and fanatical conviction that his tanks never contain anything else save this same pellucid produce. "Pride, human pride," one reflects, venturing near the combatants and cautiously interpolating a few words of compromise. Above, on the rail of the *Inevitable*, on her dizzy bridges, looking out from behind her mammoth guns, and even peering down

from the Olympian heights of her tripod masts, other human beings, full of pride and foolish misconceptions, watch the affray. Near by, two or three bluejackets, in blue overalls, wrestle with the enormous hoses, and seem striving to assume the pose of Laocoon and his sons, writhing in the grasp of some horrible and interminable metallic serpent of the sea. And this notion leads one to reconsider the possibility of Ulysses affording any fresh insight into his own mentality by his views concerning the *Inevitable*. After all, the chances are that he would merely take her as a matter of course and add her to the long list of improbable monsters which, so he said, he vanquished by his guile.]

It is time, however—and a lull in the activity favours the enterprise—to enlighten the reader concerning some of the good but insufficient reasons for silence. It would be a cruel thing to arouse curiosity only to evade satisfying it in a bold and manly fashion—"after the way of the English, in straight-flung words and few," as Kipling says. Those who have heard an Englishman explaining anything will recognize the likeness. Hearken, for instance, to these two on the afterdeck. The fact is, the writer, in addition to being a Lieutenant of Reserve in the prime of life, is addicted to literature, and has occasionally aggravated the offence by publishing books. In this his experience and morality in no way differs from that of thousands of other solvent

and likable men. But what has impressed him very forcibly in contemplating his existence as seafarer and author is, that in the very nature of things he is deprived of the joys and amenities of the literary life, and has begun to doubt whether his labour in that sphere is not mainly altruistic. Hence he is moved to set down the various good but on the whole insufficient reasons for going out of the writing business altogether and resigning himself to a purely local expression of opinion.

Take, for example, the question of applause. Keats declared he wrote "for fame," and if we analyze what Keats meant by fame we shall find that it includes contemporary applause. But of what use is applause to a man a thousand miles from Washington Square or Chelsea Embankment or Montmartre? The writer is not suggesting that an author at home hears continually the thunder of public approbation shaking his casements. His conception of how a literary man passes his time at home is necessarily vague and touched with romance, but it certainly includes a certain amount of social gambolling among artistic persons, persons who can tolerate the nuance and allusiveness so dear to bookish folk.

He imagines himself, for example, the guest of the evening at one of those old wainscoted and panelled houses on Clapham Common (doubtless pulled down long ago). There is a pleasant rustle of anticipation

as he enters the room, and the women—most of the party are women, and young—examine him with eager delight as he is presented. The young women, he imagines, are clever as well as beautiful. They "write a little," they are persuaded to confess, but allow their admiration for his books to shine in their eyes. Their conversation is only so-so perhaps, but that is because they wish their guest to do himself justice. The picture gets a little vague just here, one must admit, because as a matter of fact the writer is in the habit of smoking a particularly strong brand of tobacco all the evening and he can scarcely visualize those charming girls sitting in the opaque fog which usually sets in about nine. . . .

The fact is, the writer is idealizing the memories which have survived from what is tabulated in his literary consciousness as his "Chelsea period." It should be explained that in his pre-maritime days he roomed with a Bohemian in a flat on Cheyne Walk and became a hanger-on of the various cliques who infested the neighbourhood at that time. It was in the days when Whistler lived in an absurd house with a polished copper door—a door past which the writer saw him borne to his grave, followed by a mob of well-dressed artists, who were all secretly glad that the great man had passed away. He remembers the tense atmosphere in the church, strangely compounded of ecclesiasticism and wordly ambition, the staccato whisper of the lady-reporter—

"What name please?"—and her venomous look when he murmured absently, "Pinturicchio". . . . However, it was a failure. The cliques of Chelsea were not to be deceived. A mechanical draftsman from the city, a youth who was neither rich, clever, nor good-looking, was destined to remain outside the magic circle of the Chelsea geniuses.

Yet he gained an occasional glimpse into their mysteries. In the cant phrase of the cliques he "met" So-and-So and Thingumbob and Toodleoo and Rumty-tum. He narrowed his resources to acquire the evening dress suit and planished shirt front—the suit which long since passed into the hands of a Shaftesbury Avenue dealer in old clothes, and which will never be replaced. He "met" these people and came to various damaging conclusions concerning them. But this did not hinder him from realizing that, if he could only get *inside*, he would have a very pleasant time. He would take literary ladies home in cabs and dazzle them with his scintillating wit and satire. He would be the life of the studio parties which were attended mostly by humbugs who could not paint. He would be pointed out, as he hurried along Cheyne Walk, to Americans from Memphis, Tennessee. He would—— but this sort of thing tends to futility. It was a failure. In spite of his art-green wall paper and Liberty curtains; in spite of his Botticelli prints and poems on "The River at Dusk," and so forth, it was borne in upon

him that not only did the *cognoscenti* dislike him, but he disliked them. The impression he gathered from successful artists and authors was that their pasts were shameful and they had no desire to speak of them; while the young and obscure did not seem to be getting anywhere at all. . . .

Certainly the writer himself was not getting anywhere except into debt. The promised reactions did not come. Useless to acquire a mass of technical jargon from painters and still remain a mechanical draftsman in the city. Futile to haunt studios for literary conversation when each new acquaintance seemed more stupid and suspicious than the last. The pervasive drawl of the Oxford-gone-wrong parasites—"Awfully clever chap; have you met him?"—became a nightmare. And having collected some poems, the writer cast about for an editor.

Now it was a notable characteristic of Chelsea society in those days that it was, as it were, suspended in mid-air, like Mahomet's rock. It had no visible means of support. It was artistic, but nobody seemed to earn his living by art. It was suavely democratic, without the slightest contact with the democracy. It is the writer's opinion that the democracy, had it become aware of the existence of Chelsea society, would have battered down the æsthetic doors and put every artist and parasite to the sword. Of course many innocents, like the

writer, would have been slaughtered, but the effect upon England would have been distinctly invigorating.

By *suavely democratic* the writer implies that these people affected an indifference to "mere wealth." A woman who had an income of ten thousand pounds a year from a Bavarian brewery asked the writer to join her in her morning ride in the Park at—oh, quite early, say ten-thirty . . . A breezy creature in Donegal tweeds said he was making up a party to tour the Hungarian Alps—would the writer come? And a man in a pince-nez talked of publishing as though the thing were done every day. "Why don't you publish? I'll introduce you to—— let me see now . . ." (The writer trembled with a fearful joy. Here was the open door at last!) "Oh, I'll give you a card to Tynemouth Banks. He's just taken over the *Academic Review*. Accept? *My* experience of Tynemouth Banks is that he'll accept anything. Prices? Oh, a guinea . . ."

[An interruption in the form of a tremendous shock causes the writer at this juncture to abandon his reveries of literary adventures and run up the ward-room companion. The *Inevitable* has moved away. A gigantic submarine, like some fabled monster of the deep, is manœuvring alongside and one of her diving planes has ripped a hole in our quarter very much as a pair of scissors cuts a gash in

brown paper. The excitement is acute. The Chief Officer, accompanied by his men, seems to be engaged in some intricate calisthenic exercises. The submarine remains calm. Her twelve-inch gun droops, and seems to be regarding us with moody suspicion. It transpires that she wants a hundred tons of oil and wants it quick. Her commander receives with apathy the news that water is coming into our after coffer-dam. All hands proceed to the work of salvage. Wood is sawn, nails are produced, cement is mixed, shores are prepared, and a box filled with concrete heaved up and forced against the torn plates. The inspiration passes and all subside into a sullen, hard-breathing silence. The sea is an inhuman thing.]

The writer knew nothing about the *Academic Review*, as he chooses to call it. It cost sixpence, and he could not afford sixpences in those days. Moreover, it was one of those journals which for years had been the sport of wealthy amateurs who knew very little about journalism and nothing at all about literature. At this time a sporting peer had bought it and installed Tynemouth Banks in the editorial chair. Tynemouth Banks was reputed to be an expert editor. In the British Museum Library he was announced as the author of "Highways and Byways in the Frisian Islands," a handbook for tourists. The new offices of the *Academic Review* were in Serjeants' Inn, between Clifford's Inn and

Chancery Lane. A young lady with many bangles (bangles were jingling everywhere in those days) took the two cards which the writer offered, but said Mr. Tynemouth Banks was out. As he wandered through Clifford's Inn, where he afterward had chambers and wrote half of a long novel, the writer began to wonder whether the doors were open to him after all. A few days later, when an invitation to call at Tynemouth Banks's private residence in Onslow Gardens came to the flat in Cheyne Walk, he still wondered. Some faint premonition warned him that this was not the way. Nevertheless, the dress suit came out and he made his way to Onslow Gardens, a high range of heartless houses near Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors.

It is only honest to confess that this was almost the only occasion on which the writer had met an editor. Editors were to him a mythical race. And the adventure seems so improbable now that he often wonders whether the whole thing is not a dream. Tynemouth Banks turned out to be a sleek, beady-eyed, black-mustached little creature, wearing valuable rings and a black opal stud. Two stockbrokers and a short-haired woman in an Empire gown were drinking whisky in the billiard room. One of the stockbrokers told a story about a young woman who . . . a story the writer had heard in the machine shop six years before. There was a yell of laughter——

"Published anything yet?" asked the editor of the *Academic Review* as they went upstairs.

It might be supposed that the writer, after such an experience, might have lost his illusions as to the idyllic nature of the literary life ashore. But illusions about shore life die hard at sea. It seems unreasonable to forego the simple delights of authorship: the tea-table tattle about So-and-So's prices and Thingumbob's last book, how Miss Boodle was determined to marry the author of "The Misogynist" and succeeded—and has twins . . . Hard to do without proofs. When the proofs of the writer's first book were ready, he was repairing a broken condenser in the gasping heat of Singapore in July. On the next occasion he was cooling bananas in Costa Rica. Proofs found him again in a creek of the Niger River. Proofs are stubborn things. If any author wishes to know how stubborn, let him come up from below, where it is a hundred and thirty Fahrenheit, to his room where it is apparently a hundred and eighty, his finger-nails broken and destroyed with oil, his heart full of care and the peculiar bitterness which sea life engenders—and find his proofs on the bunk.

George Moore, in one of his interminable autobiographies, says, "Proofs always inspire me." Probably they do—in an exquisite apartment furnished with beautiful books and pictures, the plate-glass windows throttling the roar of West London

down to a far-off murmur. It is the failure to attain to these felicities that has raised doubts in the writer's mind whether, after all, it is worth while. . . . Editors have become a myth. An uneasy feeling is born in the writer's bosom that he himself is becoming a myth. Such things can happen. He is reminded of an extraordinary case of a human being, a warm, friendly, seafaring creature, becoming suddenly transformed into a———

[At this juncture the writer, propped up in his bed-place and becoming at last genuinely interested in the recital of his private griefs, is informed by his Commanding Officer that the ship is to proceed at full speed to Lesbos. A Muscovite destroyer, the *Turgueniej*, abandoned by the Bolsheviki and salved by the Allies, has broken her tow-rope and is drifting ashore. Immediate assistance is required. Pensively wondering how long this sort of thing is to go on, and recalling an incident in European history known as the Hundred Years' War, the writer gives the necessary orders and paces the after-deck as the ship drives into the sharp teeth of a typical Ægean gale. Experience of these swift, meteorological tantrums inspires respect for the seamanship of the ancients, who careered round among these islands in what were little more than canoes. The Lesbian Isle! The Commanding Officer, who has never heard of Sappho save in Daudet's novel of that name, alludes to a certain amount of *kudos* which

may be extracted from the venture—if she can be got off. Sappho? No, the destroyer. No doubt the Admiralty will cough up something . . . the wind blows his words away. Something? Well . . substantial. Eh? The wireless boy, a rangy youth with romantic eyes, rustles along the deck like a leaf and hands the Captain a signal pad. . . . "*Turgueniej* ashore, total loss, return. . . ."]

Yes, an extraordinary case. Before metempsychosis set in he was the Navigating Lieutenant of the writer's last ship, a seaplane carrier. He might be described as an embittered idealist, not quite seeing what he had gotten out of his twenty-five years' faithful service; not seeing, either, the astonishing destiny just ahead of him. . . . Had he no premonition, that evening when he strolled into the empty ward room, where the writer was sitting with his novel half written before him? It was very quiet. The pilots and observers, noisy children, were ashore skylarking. The Paymaster sat in his room reading his only book: Dean Ramsay's "Scottish Life and Character." His chuckle, as he perceived some aged joke, synchronized with the faint rhythm of the dynamo two flats below.

The writer had seized the opportunity to bring out his manuscript, as a rat brings out a bit of cheese-rind and gnaws it on the hearth-rug when folks are away. Now and again a destroyer, slipping out

of harbour in the darkness, would give a short sharp "whup-whup!" on her siren, like a terrier's bark. The wine-steward's shadow remained motionless in his small bar in the passage beyond the open door, a curved silhouette bent over a tattered and coverless copy of Elinor Glyn's "Three Weeks." The framed portrait of King George over the sideboard vibrated so that His Majesty appeared to be convulsed with sudden laughter, as the other door opened and the Navigating Officer entered and advanced to his appointed place in the adventure. A tall, stout, erect figure of a man, with a sharp, weather-beaten visage. His movements had the precise deliberation of those accustomed to command. Command! Thereby hangs the tale.

For the novel which lay in a flurry of white sheets upon the dark green of the ward-room table was entitled "Command: A Study in Patriotism." The writer had been preoccupied for some time with the psychology of command. He had suffered much during his years at sea from the idiosyncrasies of commanders. In the idle moments of busy years a tale of a man who aspired to command, who appeared unable to convince others of his fitness, and who had wandered into forlorn byways of sensuality made its appearance upon many sheets of paper. Secretly, of course, as becomes a good deed. And it was without any suspicion of its real nature that the Navigating Officer sat down, lit a cigarette, rang

the bell for the bartender, and drew the manuscript toward him.

And for a long time he neither spoke nor moved, save to reach his hand absently toward ash-tray or glass of chartreuse—an alert, immobile, enigmatic figure. He read on, page after page. The writer wrote on, page after page. Some people have this mysterious gift—one can write in their presence. But of course a man can read faster than any one can write except perhaps the far-famed Trollope, with his completed page every quarter of an hour, or Arnold Bennett, or no matter. The Navigating Officer finished chapter four, pushed the thing away, and rose. He began pacing up and down, one hand in his trousers pocket. It was at this point that the writer noticed a change. It became obvious that his brother officer was labouring under some strong excitement, as though he had absorbed a potion into his system and it was beginning to work. His pace quickened, slackened, halted. He held up his left hand and examined the nails narrowly, as though already suspecting some modification of his personality. And then he spoke. He said he couldn't understand how the writer had learned so much about a shipmate's private life. This was denied. The characters in "Command" were imaginary. They had been slowly and painfully evolved . . .

"But dammit, this chap who comes home from

the China coast, who had a girl out there and who gets engaged at home to a dark girl—why see here, even his bank's the same as mine—Anglo-Celestial. Dammit, it is *me* you're writing about! It's my ideas. Here, where he says—— where is it?" He ruffled the sheets. "Where he tells the old man—you know. Well, the very words I used once. And what gets me is how you found out about the girl in England—the one he's engaged to—having a foreign strain in her. I tell you it's me. It's marvellous. Well, I suppose I must have let it out when I was stewed. Rather shirty trick that, what?"

Now what interested the writer in this harangue was not the accusations — entirely unfounded—levelled at him for betraying vinous confidences, but the obvious fact that his brother officer was fascinated by seeing himself in the character in the book. Of course he was not very much like this character, save in externals. He had been captured by the externals, not being a literary man. He began to brood upon his image reflected in the story. He would make inquiries as to the probable course of events. He indulged in retrospect and would allude to his past life in the Orient. By degrees those traits in which he differed from the chief character in the novel receded. He was ceasing to be a human being and becoming a character in fiction! He cultivated a grievance until the shadow obscured him. Now and again he would emerge to make some

observation as to what "a girl would do" in certain circumstances, meaning of course the girl in the story. He was very anxious to know whether they married eventually, but as this was not known to anybody he retired unsatisfied. By degrees his personality faded, and the writer was not surprised one day to be told that he had gone. "Gone home on leave" was the official explanation, but the writer knows better. He has searched the Navy List, but the Navigating Officer is gone from the Navy List, if he was ever there. He has become a myth, a memory of a quiet evening, white sheets on a green cloth, green chartreuse . . . King George convulsed with sudden laughter as the door opens and a character walks in . . .

[At this point the Third Officer (who attends to the mails) looks into the writer's cabin, holding back the curtain, and remarks, "I shall be sealing up the bag in a few minutes, Chief. Have you anything to go?"]

THE IDEA

DINNER was over, and little glasses of red and green liqueurs were being carefully transposed by the stewards as they withdrew the cloth. Most of us were smoking, and a game of chess was beginning at the foot of the table. The gramophone was rendering an Irish jig, and the Chief Engineer, from Londonderry, was incommoding the wardroom servants in front of the sideboard with a *pas seul* of his own invention. It was a typical scene. Half a dozen men were laughing and talking together at the top of the table, when someone suddenly remarked:

"Oh, I don't think there's much in it, you know, if you only get a good idea."

I looked at the speaker, a young seaplane observer, known chiefly to me as a devoted reader of poetry. I found, to my surprise, that they were talking of literature. Some friend at home had "made a hit" with a story, I gathered, and the talk had focussed upon the fascinating subject of an idea.

"I have read somewhere," remarked the surgeon, filling his pipe, "that there are only nine original ideas for a story in the world, and they were all discovered ages ago by the Chinese."

"You mean the nine Muses," murmured the Flight Commander.

"Oh no," said the Surgeon, "I mean what I say—nine ideas. I forget what they are, but the argument of the writer was that all plots fall into these nine categories. You can't get away from the nine original ideas."

"Like a cat with her nine lives," suggested the Flight Commander. "No wonder magazine stories are piffle."

"I have an aunt who lives at Nine Elms," interjected the junior watchkeeper, and was suppressed.

"I don't think you've got it right, Doc," I remarked, moving nearer. "The actual number of ideas is, in my opinion, immaterial. Even granting only nine original plots, the combinations of nine numbers are infinite, I am given to understand by the mathematicians. Facts prove that it is so. I myself have known men who had ideas to burn, as they say."

"That's all my ideas are fit for . . . to burn," muttered the Surgeon.

"I am convinced," I went on, "that in the matter of ideas he who meditates is lost. I used to know a man who spent his life hunting for ideas." The young seaplane observer was watching me, and I preserved an aspect of bland abstraction. Without betraying any confidences, I was aware that he had secret ambitions toward literature.

"This man," I resumed, "had been for many years librarian at a college in London where I was a student. His knowledge of literature was as comprehensive as mine was sketchy. He had been at a German university and was familiar not only with books, but with the art and music of western Europe. He had written a short play, on some historical subject, which had had a short run in London years before I met him. Of course he was much older than I, but we had in common a leaning toward a Bohemian existence, which ultimately took the form of a flat in Chelsea, in the days when artists and authors lived along Cheyne Walk, and there was a sort of Latin Quarter to be found there.

"I had a job in an office in the city, and he, of course, had to be at the college till nine or ten o'clock at night. We used to go to a tavern in Knightsbridge and stay till midnight, when we would walk down Sloane Street and along the river-front to our flat, where the housekeeper had left a cold supper spread in our room overlooking the Thames. And all the time we talked. Whether it was brilliant talk or not, I am not prepared to say. The point is that this man, with whom I spent a great portion of my time, was consumed with a preposterous craving to discover what he defined as 'an idea for a play.' His puny little success with a one-act curtain raiser had thrown him slightly out of centre and he had been wabbling ever since. And the curious

thing about him was that this obsession kept company in his mind with the perfectly irreconcilable conviction that 'everything had been done.'

"He was an accomplished improvisator on the piano, and on fine summer evenings our open window on Cheyne Walk would be cluttered with quite a little crowd of home-going sweethearts and so forth, listening to him as he played in the darkness. But when I would say: 'Why not write it down?' he would make a gesture of negation and answer that it was no use; everything had been done. He would watch me scribbling away on Sundays, and assure me that it was all futile—everything had been done. Of course this was in his pessimistic periods. At other times he would rouse up and discuss the possibility of hitting upon 'an idea.'

"He had what I call a typical misconception of the very nature of literature. He seemed to imagine that ideas were like nuggets of gold which any one might stumble upon at any moment. He was preoccupied with the notion of *wealth* to be obtained from the idea. With all his vast knowledge of books this man was for ever looking at literature through the wrong end of the telescope. He would turn over the most imbecile suggestions for books; for instance—a novel in which all the characters were wicked, or a novel in which all the characters were good and came to a bad end. His desire, you see, was not to evolve something out of himself, but

to do something superficially different from some well-known success. To write because he had to, because he would enjoy doing it, never entered his head.

"Don't imagine that he was a fool. On the contrary he had an instinct for the genuine which was unerring up to the middle of the nineteenth century. Here he lost himself and got involved in all sorts of mazes. And it was this sudden failure of his critical insight to cope with his contemporaries which led me one day to compare a man's intellectual life with a projectile fired from a gun. Each follows a hyperbolic curve which reaches its maximum height at a certain period and then begins to decline. Some never reach the point where the man himself is standing. Some are still flying ahead and are not understood by us. Of course, I added, I spoke in hyperbole. He was a man of nervous and disconcerting movements, gray but not old, and his pale eyes had the peculiar glaze of the idealist who is also a failure. He made a quick gesture and rapidly exclaimed:

"'That's an idea! That's an idea! Now how can we work that out?' and he fell into a reverie which lasted till the saloon closed.

"It was the same when I told him that in a story I was writing a miser made the discovery that he could get his money back in the next world if his heirs squandered it in this. "Now there's an idea!"

he burst out, and began walking to and fro with his eternal cigarette. 'If I could only get an idea,' he would mutter. 'Something really original . . . there's a fortune in it.' He would bump into an idea and remain unaware of its proximity. I remember when he came down to join me in Chelsea, he was very much upset. He had been two years in lodgings in Bayswater, kept by a middle-aged widow, when suddenly she had come up to his room 'just as he was thinking out an idea for a play' and asked him to marry her. He was in a terrible state. He packed his portmanteaus and trunk, took a four-wheeler, and came down at once to me. He had never heard of such a thing in his life, he assured me! He had never done or said anything that any one could construe into an advance. It took him weeks to get over the shock and return to his hunt for an idea.

"He was like a traveller through a rich and pleasant land who is under the illusion of being in a barren desert. That is the point I want you to notice, for this friend of mine was typical of that period of thought in Bohemian London. Oh dear no, he wasn't the only one by any means. I daresay there were thousands of well-meaning and cultured ladies and gentlemen in London in those days who were afflicted with the same peculiar perversion of vision. They were responsible for the notion spreading through schools and colleges, suburbs and country

towns, that an idea is a nugget of gold to be suddenly found in a heap of dirt. Now if you will permit me to say so, you are quite wrong. My friend was wrong. I don't wish to convey the impression that I was a sort of youthful Socrates who amused himself by studying the habits of an elderly failure. But I never could satisfy myself that his mania for an 'idea' or an 'original plot' was the right way to go about."

"Then how do you propose to go about?" inquired the Surgeon.

"Well, we'll come to that presently. What I was going to say was this. If we go back a little way in the history of story-writing, we shall find that, following on the unique success of Dickens as a serialist, a number of other men achieved a somewhat similar success without the greatness. That is to say, these men followed what they conceived to be Dickens's method. They planned interminable serials with a central mystery which remained undivulged until the end, and was supposed to keep the reader's tongue hanging out with anxiety. But as a matter of fact the anxiety was more the author's than the reader's, for the former was often driven to the craziest shifts to maintain the agony and extricate himself from the difficulties in which he found himself. As Oscar Wilde shrewdly and wittily remarked of these writers, 'the suspense of he author becomes unbearable.' Now, while it is

true that Dickens usually had a few mysteries in his novels, mysteries which somehow seem strangely unnecessary and clumsy to us to-day, his success was in spite of, not because of them. His followers could not see that, and spent their lives devising problems which, to quote Wilde again, were not worth solving.

"If that were all, the evil would have died with them. Unfortunately some of these men became editors, and the evil that editors do lives after them, as well as the good. As editors these authors established a mandarinic control over the young men who were beginning to write. It gradually became impossible to sell a manuscript which did not conform to their conception of a story. Not only was the number of words fixed, but the whole business was reduced to a few rules. Every story had to have a 'plot.' By plot was understood either a love story, a ghost story, or a murder story. The story *par excellence* was one which combined all three. I am speaking now of the 'eighties and early 'nineties. If you want to know how they succeeded, turn over the old magazines in a second-hand bookstore and try to read the stories. You will discover, to your astonishment, many men who have since made their mark as originals, laboriously fitting together the sorriest hack-stuff at the command of some editor who had become famous in the same line. By virtue of their own genius they

have escaped; but they are only a few out of the scores who lived and died in the grip of that highly organized convention.

"And the strange and terrible thing about it all was that every book produced at that time which is still alive broke every rule that the mandarins had made. Even that last infirmity of ignoble minds—the happy ending—was flouted on occasion. But I am not concerned either with the men who broke down the walls of this penitentiary, or with the men who saw their chance and followed out through the gap into freedom. What I want you to remember is that the great majority believed that story-writing did go by rule, that you could learn to do it just as you learned to play the piano or ride a bicycle. They paid for their belief with their lives, some of them. They lived in garrets and wrote stories of beautiful young ladies of high degree in love with diplomatists and landowners. They burst their poor heads looking for 'plots' and 'ideas.' They planned happy endings while their own hearts were breaking with failure. And it was all so futile, so stupidly wrong. The whole trouble lay in the fact that they were trying to write without in the first place getting any knowledge of life. They were so preoccupied with the technical details of a senseless conventionalism that they never became aware of the life around them. Do you remember the plaintive cry of one of them—'I

could be a great poet if I only knew the names of things'!

"The man I have been telling you about was like that. New ideas were exploding all round him, and all he could do was to shrink into himself and mutter that 'everything had been done. All the ideas had been used.' It never entered his head to take hold and write about the first thing that came to hand, to go on writing. It never struck him that an idea was a living thing, which grows and develops and ultimately brings forth other ideas. He couldn't see that. I have often thought of the last time I ever saw him, early in the war. We had been to the terminal to get my baggage, for I was to spend the night at his place. He was talking of an idea he had for writing a series of articles on the dramatists of the seventeenth century. I applauded the notion, for he really knew more about the seventeenth century than he did about the twentieth. But imagine it! Conceive the mentality of a man who proposed such a thing, with Antwerp falling, with a British Fleet destroyed off Coronel, with every heart in England on fire in a gigantic struggle with the powers of darkness! Nevertheless I applauded the notion, for he desired greatly to earn a few guineas. And as we came out of the terminal station into Liverpool Street, and he was complaining of the difficulty in getting a central idea for each essay, it seemed as if the whole

world dissolved in a series of explosions. There was a sheet of green flame in front of us and the sound as of every window in London falling in shivers. We darted into the station and waited for death. It seemed impossible that we could escape. My friend collapsed into a fit of ague. Bomb after bomb fell and burst with its tremendous detonation and he sat there on my grip and muttered, 'My God! My God!' The mothers with children and the men who had collected with us on that stone stairway, looked curiously at him as he sat shuddering. I don't think he ever recovered from that little adventure. The twentieth century was too much for him. I often think of him, now that he is gone, wandering in the shades in his fruitless search for an idea. Or perhaps he has found one, and is spending eternity working it out!"

"Well," said the Surgeon, ringing the bell for the bartender, "that doesn't seem to get us any nearer to the solution. You don't propose that a man should die or commit suicide in order to get an original idea for a story, do you?"

"Not at all. My point is that a young man must let his ideas grow, and not be continually rooting them up to see how they are getting on. The broad difference between us and the old conventionalists is this—that while they constructed what they called a plot, something like a Chinese puzzle, and fitted their highly conventional characters into it, we pre-

fer to conceive one or more characters evolved out of our own souls by their impact upon others, and leave these characters to fashion the story in their own way. Just as the realists who followed them were not real, so the romanticists themselves were not really romantic. The very essence of a romance is its fortuitousness, if I may say so. It may be succinct or it may be rambling. It may have the clear-cut beauty of a jewel or the shadowy elusiveness of a dream. It will depend for its authenticity upon the genuine quality of your mood. But in nine cases out of ten the idea, as you call it, is not clearly apparent to the author himself until he has gone too far to go back. He sees it in a glass darkly and then, perhaps, face to face."

"What'll you have?" asked the surgeon.

LOST ADVENTURES

It is a harmless diversion of authors to express a weakness for various methods of beginning a story. Very few eminent authors seem able to resist the distant horseman of G. P. R. James's novels, who might have been seen as the shades of night were falling. Blessed with perfect faith and eyesight one may agree. Others like what used to be called a Proem, a sort of literary shock absorber, a kind of intermediate chamber where one is accustomed to a change of atmosphere before being transferred to the full pressure of the story. It was a favourite device of novelists when I was a youngster, and I regarded their Proems with aversion because they had no ascertainable connection with the story. Others are drawn toward the letter form, the first chapter, or perhaps introduction, ushering the reader into the very innermost shrines of intimacy. Others again like to go head-foremost into the very thick of the action. Authors who do this are practical. They "get" the reader with a short scene of gun play in a Western camp and tell him what the trouble was afterward. Shrewd fellows they are!

But personally the one story I cannot resist is the

story whose first chapter begins with a birth. "David Copperfield" is for me the great book of my life. It begins on Page One with the simple and majestic declaration,

"I Am Born"

and I began to read it not very long after I had been born myself. Being born, at the time when that fat and fascinating volume first came into the nursery, was about the only thing I had accomplished without mishap. I said to myself "I, too, have been born" and lay flat on my stomach on the hearthrug to pursue the tale anew. There is nothing like a start, and being born, however pessimistic one may become in later years, is undeniably a start. And I defy any one to resist the attractive possibilities of a being who has achieved the momentous feat of getting himself born.

But as time went on and I read "David Copperfield" so many times that whole episodes are graven verbatim on my memory, I began to discover a number of startling divergences between David's conventional arrival in England and my own. David, it seemed, was a posthumous child, a hard word which gave me a lot of trouble in the beginning. Inquiry revealed the agreeable fact that I was not posthumous. No one will ever fathom the extraordinary concrete images evoked in a child's mind by elusive abstractions. For some reason the word posthumous called up ideas of strange convoluted things seen in

Doré's illustrations of Dante's Inferno. Further investigations carried on in the family circle elicited the fact that I myself was an exasperating child and a fit candidate for that grim neighbourhood. I was also a child afflicted with innumerable privileges no other child had, none of which seemed to do me any good. Like most English children of the 'eighties I became reconciled to the fact that I was a bad lot and only some special intervention would save me from an alarming end.

But at that time I was only remotely interested in ends. It was beginnings which preoccupied the infant imagination. In due course it was possible to visualize the differences between Copperfield's beginnings and my own. Copperfield, after getting born in a house in Suffolk, achieved felicity by going to live in a ship. I, on the contrary, had come out of a ship to live in a house. This seemed to me hard luck. I seemed to have had all sorts of thrilling experiences when I was too young to appreciate them. I brooded on this for a good while. I tried to recall the irrevocable. In a previous state of existence I had been rocked in the cradle of the deep, I had weathered storms and seen strange lands from under the arched white sails of ships. I had lain in darkness while the feet of men had stamped on the deck overhead and their hoarse calls had come faintly through the roaring of the winds and the thunder of beam seas. There had been mutinies and madness,

short rations and stern measures, and I had remained oblivious to it all. It is not too much to say, provided the reader will not misconstrue the remark, that at times I wished I had never been born!

These, however, were passing moods. There were compensations, of which in time I availed myself. The house might not be a ship but it was filled with pictures of ships, with talk of ships, and occasionally with the captains of ships. They would come home with my father as evening fell, these gray-whiskered ship-masters, and the dining room would fill with a blue fog as they drank brandy and water and smoked their pipes and discussed the one subject in which they were interested—ships. In this nautical atmosphere I passed my time, merely emerging for a few hours each day to go to a school where no one knew anything about ships. Indeed the ignorance of the boys and masters was, for a maritime nation, remarkable. For them a ship was a ship—they knew no distinction between a bark, a schooner, a brig, or a square-rigger. They were unable to define the functions of a spankerboom, a cat-head, or a jimmy-green. At home these things were household words. Punishment was described as a "dose of manila" or "the rope's end."

On the walls were oil paintings of ships in full sail, in perilous proximity to ugly headlands or in the act of running down innocent Oriental craft. Dusky photographs, enlarged from daguerreotypes, re-

vealed ancient caracks about to be launched or careened for scaling, like prehistoric monsters reclining amid a forest of bare poles festooned with insecure ladders like gigantic climbing plants. And then when I had attained the age of six, he for his last and I for my first conscious voyage, my father and I went to sea.

Even then the age of sail was on the point of vanishing. The sea captains who had filled our dining room with smoke had all "gone into steam." And it was on an old tramp steamer out of Rotterdam that I began going to sea and writing about it at the same time.

The imaginative memory, however, is an incalculable thing. That voyage was notable more for encountering a rich collection of human curios—shipmasters, mates, engineers, and ship chandlers in Cardiff. Nautical impressions seem to have had their genesis in a little smoky cubby-hole of an office in London which my father rented in an immense block of buildings called Number Twenty-Seven Leadenhall Street, on the site of the present Baltic Exchange. Up to this shrine we used to go, my tall old father and I, several times a week, and there I would spend the day. It is a perplexing problem to decide just why he took me, for he invariably behaved as though he were trying to lose me. I would be left in extremely trying situations. More than once he forgot me at the tavern where he ate a "two shilling or-

dinary," left me wedged in between a couple of plump underwriters and unable to get out of the box to follow him. Sometimes I would be stranded high and dry on the stool of a neighbour's office, whence I could not get down without disaster. And once he started home without me, while I sat abandoned to the three daughters of the house in the old Anchor Hotel in the Minories, three fresh-complexioned and well-meaning young persons who read to me the savage old English fairy stories and frightened me into a hysterical storm of tears.

My great friend in these tribulations was the office-boy. He was a youth of singular accomplishments, all of which he would exercise for my delight. He lived in a dungeon containing a safe and a letter press, and with a number of hull models on the walls, ornaments which impressed me unfavourably by reason of their incomplete condition and utter unsuitability for sailing in a pond. My friend the office-boy, however, made me forget these things in his company. He had a jew's-harp, upon which he played ravishing tunes while I sat on the desk and inclined my ear to his shoulder. He gave me a whistle with which I caused a scandal in the train going home. Sometimes, having business down at the docks, he would take me with him, and I would be transported to an Elysium of loud noises, delicious odours, and a great turmoil of labour. I would be taken on board great ships and left to prowl about

cabins and alley-ways. What pilgrimages ensued along those alley-ways, whose mysterious teak doors and swaying curtains would suddenly reveal new and astonishing samples of humanity? What smells of supreme pungency poured forth from the frowsy portals of lazarets and stewards' lockers! What languors of repletion followed the banquets of raisins and dried apples and ginger beer and damp biscuits, banquets specially organized by diplomatic minions for "the Cap'n's little boy"! What ecstasies of pleasure in the boarding of a tug which glided away down river to Rotherhithe where, at the bottom of an enormous dry dock, I saw my father, and wondered how in the world he had got there, and how he was going to get out, and what would happen to him, and to me, if the water came in suddenly and washed him away, like a black beetle in a bath! And better than all, what times of golden glamour when my friend the office-boy would have what he called "an 'our orf," and we would wander into Leadenhall Market, where he would introduce me to the great dogs who guarded the meat with expressions of incredible virtue on their severe and shaggy faces; to the cats, with their fur all sawdust; and to the parrots who lived, like Simon Stylites, on the tops of pillars, and who uttered raucous irrelevancies to an inattentive audience! He was very kind to me, that office-boy, and never left me in difficulties. He always took me carefully back to the office and called

my father's attention to my clean hands and face (after a secret orgy of popcorn purchased near Aldgate Pump), and softened for me in many ways the shocks of existence, so that in time I began to be reconciled to my lot and no longer regretted my lost adventures.

THE MARKET

THERE is a sharp, imperative rap on my outer door; a rap having within its insistent urgency a shadow of delicate diffidence, as though the person responsible were a trifle scared of the performance and on tip-toe to run away. I roll over and regard the clock. Four-forty. One of the dubious by-products of continuous service as a senior assistant at sea is the habit of waking automatically about four A. M. This gives one several hours, when ashore, to meditate upon one's sins, frailties, and (more rarely) triumphs and virtues. Because a man who gets up at say, four-thirty, is regarded with aversion ashore. His family express themselves with superfluous vigour. He must lie still and meditate, or suffer the ignominy of being asked when he is going away again.

But this morning, in these old chambers in an ancient Inn buried in the heart of London City, I have agreed to get up and go out. The reason for this momentous departure from a life of temporary but deliberate indolence is a lady. "*Cherchez la femme*," as the French say with the dry animosity of a logical race. Well, she is not far to seek, being on the outside of my heavy oak door tapping, as al-

ready hinted, with a sharp, insistent delicacy. To this romantic summons I reply with an inarticulate growl of acquiscence, and proceed to get ready. To relieve the anxiety of any reader who imagines an impending elopement it may be stated in succinct truthfulness that we are bound on no such desperate venture. We are going round the corner a few blocks up the Strand, to Covent Garden Market, to see the arrival of the metropolitan supply of produce.

Having accomplished a hasty toilet, almost as primitive as that favoured by gentlemen aroused to go on watch, and placating an occasional repetition of the tapping by brief protests and reports of progress, I take hat and cane, and drawing the huge antique bolts of my door, discover a young woman standing by the window looking out upon the quadrangle of the old inn. She is a very decided young woman, who is continually thinking out what she calls "stunts" for articles in the press. That is her profession, or one of her professions—writing articles for the press. The other profession is selling manuscripts, which constitutes the tender bond between us. For the usual agent's commission she is selling one of my manuscripts. Being an unattached and, as it were, unprotected male, she plans little excursions about London to keep me instructed and entertained. Here she is attired in the flamboyant finery of a London flower-girl. She is about to get

the necessary copy for a special article in a morning paper. With the exception of a certain expectant flash of her bright black Irish eyes, she is entirely businesslike. Commenting on the beauty of an early summer morning in town, we descend, and passing out under the ponderous ancient archway, we make our leisurely progress westward down the Strand.

London is always beautiful to those who love and understand that extraordinary microcosm; but at five of a summer morning there is about her an exquisite quality of youthful fragrance and debonair freshness which goes to the heart. The newly hosed streets are shining in the sunlight as though paved with "patins of bright gold." Early 'buses rumble by from neighbouring barns where they have spent the night. And, as we near the new Gaiety Theatre, thrusting forward into the great rivers of traffic soon to pour round its base like some bold Byzantine promontory, we see Waterloo Bridge thronged with wagons, piled high. From all quarters they are coming, past Charing Cross the great wains are arriving from Paddington Terminus, from the market-garden section of Middlesex and Surrey. Down Wellington Street come carts laden with vegetables from Brentwood and Coggleshall; and neat vans packed with crates of watercress which grows in the lush lowlands of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire; and behind us are thundering huge four-horse vehicles from the docks, vehicles with peaches from South

Africa, potatoes from the Canary Islands, onions from France, apples from California, oranges from the West Indies, pineapples from Central America, grapes from Spain, and bananas from Colombia.

We turn in under an archway behind a theatre and adjacent to the stage-door of the Opera House. The booths are rapidly filling with produce. Gentlemen in long alpaca coats and carrying formidable marbled notebooks walk about with an important air. A mountain range of pumpkins rises behind a hill of cabbages. Festoons of onions are being suspended from rails. The heads of barrels are being knocked in, disclosing purple grapes buried in cork-dust. Pears and figs, grown under glass for wealthy patrons, repose in soft tissue-lined boxes. A broken crate of Tangerine oranges has spilled its contents in a splash of ruddy gold on the plank runway. A wagon is driven in, a heavy load of beets, and the broad wheels crush through the soft fruit so that the air is heavy with the acrid sweetness.

We pick our way among the booths and stalls until we find the flowers. Here is a crowd of ladies—young, so-so, and some quite matronly, and all dressed in this same flamboyant finery of which I have spoken. They are grouped about an almost overpowering mass of blooms. Roses just now predominate. There is a satisfying solidity about the bunches, a glorious abundance which, in a commodity so easily enjoyed without ownership, is

scarcely credible. I feel no desire to own these huge aggregations of odorous beauty. It would be like owning a harem, one imagines. Violets, solid patches of vivid blue in round baskets, eglantine in dainty boxes, provide a foil to the majestic blazonry of the roses and the dew-spangled forest of maiden-hair fern near by.

"And what are those things at all?" demands my companion, diverted for a moment from the flowers. She nods toward a mass of dull-green affairs piled on mats or being lifted from big vans. She is a cockney and displays surprise when she is told those things are bananas. She shru gsand turns again to the musk roses, and forgets. But to me, as the harsh, penetrating odour of the green fruit cuts across the heavy perfume of the flowers, comes a picture of the farms in distant Colombia or perhaps Costa Rica. There is nothing like an odour to stir memories. I see the timber pier and the long line of rackety open-slatted cars jangling into the dark shed, pushed by a noisy, squealing locomotive. I see the boys lying asleep between shifts, their enormous straw hats covering their faces as they sprawl. In the distance rise the blue mountains; behind is the motionless blue sea. I hear the whine of the elevators, the monotonous click of the counters, the harsh cries of irresponsible and argumentative natives. I feel the heat of the tropic day, and see the gleam of the white waves breaking on yellow sands below tall palms. I recall

the mysterious, impenetrable solitude of the jungle, a solitude alive, if one is equipped with knowledge, with a ceaseless warfare of winged and crawling hosts. And while my companion is busily engaged in getting copy for a special article about the Market, I step nimbly out of the way of a swarthy gentleman from Calabria, who with his two-wheeled barrow is the last link in the immense chain of transportation connecting the farmer in the distant tropics and the cockney pedestrian who halts on the sidewalk and purchases a banana for a couple of pennies.

RACE

I

"It is an extraordinary thing," I find myself reflecting, standing up to let the waiter take away the luncheon tray, and looking out of the polished brass scuttle in a meditative fashion. Coming alongside is one of the company's launches with a party of passengers. They confirm my suspicion that it is an extraordinary thing, this problem of race.

The door has closed behind the coloured gentleman and his tray, and I continue to look out of the window, across the lagoon, which is as smooth and shining as a sheet of bright new tin, to the shores, rising tier on tier of inviolate verdure, to the blue highlands fifty miles away.

There is a tap at the door; it opens, and Don Carlos enters, wishing to know if I am coming in the boat.

To one brought up in the dense air and congested mentality of a very old land, the phenomenon of Don Carlos focuses upon his extensive and peculiar familiarity with republics and liberty. The staple products of his native land are revolutions, panegyrics of liberty, and methodical volcanic eruptions which bury patriots and rebels impartially, and roll

black rivers of hot lava over their tin-pot tantrums. The principal export, one gathers, too, is talent fleeing from an excess of liberty. So he adumbrates in his gay boyish fashion, humming "My country, 'tis of thee"; though whether he means Costaragua, where he was born, or Provence, where his father was born, or Spain, where his mother was born, or the United States of America, where he is now investigating new and startling phases of liberty, he does not say. We may assume, however, that his impressions of Saxon America are so far favourable, since he is determined to remain.

Some difficulty is encountered when the attempt is made to classify him on the ship. In his quality of Ariel, he is everything, everywhere, only provided there is mechanism to be tended, There is an element of the uncanny in his intuitive comprehension of machinery, from the operation of a sextant to the intestines of a brine-pump, a phonograph, or a camera lens. Perceiving like lightning, and working like a leaping flame, he provides the stolid Anglo-Saxon mechanics with a fund of puzzled, indignant thoughts. One observes them taking stealthy stock of themselves and debating whether they are awake or dreaming, so incredible does it appear to them to be bossed by a stripling of one-and-twenty, and, they mutter, a Dago. This, one gathers, is not to be borne by men whose ancestors stood meekly round the village inn while Duke William's hook-nosed min-

ions took the names of all the folk for the first edition of Doomsday Book. Intolerable for hot-blooded gentlemen whose sires proclaimed to a wondering world a new scheme of government, and made it work by flinging wide the door to all who were willing to work.

And how can one fail to sympathize with them? When a man has grown up in a thousand-year-old tradition that it will take him seven years to learn a trade, he is in no condition to admit the possibilities of genius. And for Don Carlos there is no such thing as tradition. He had but childish memories of the days before the war. While Costaragua cannot be said to have no history, what she has is not of a kind that can be safely taught in the local schools. He approaches our civilizations with the frank eyes of a stellar visitor and the all-embracing knowledge of a university professor. You must remember his lack of tradition, if you are to understand his question about history. For he demands to know the use of it all. What does it get you? Law, Science, Music, Engineering—yes, very fine. But why did he have to learn about the Battle of Lepanto, the Council of Trent, and the Diet of Worms? He makes this pertinent query as he pulls energetically at the starter of the motor-boat; and any reply is lost in the thunderous roar of the engine.

I take the tiller as we rush away from the ship's side. For among the many facilities of his career,

including the divergent enterprises of electrician, turbine expert, timekeeper on a banana farm, checker on a coffee plantation, moving-picture operator, engine driver, clerk in a government office, toolmaker in a shipyard, and all-round marine engineer, he belongs *par excellence* to the gasolene age. The internal-combustion engine is to him a familiar spirit, if the jest may be pardoned. For on this the story, which deals also with liberty and so forth, depends.

I take the tiller as we rush from the ship's side. Don Carlos bends over the engine for a few moments, adjusting the spark and satisfying himself that the circulating waster is performing its functions; then he climbs out of the engine-pit and runs along the gunwale to the after thwarts, where he sits and begins to talk. And the point of the story is the destruction of a young and exquisite sentiment in his heart. He does not clearly perceive this, and may not comprehend its full significance for a good many years yet. But it has a pertinent bearing upon the aforesaid problem of race, and the genesis of nationality under the modern conceptions of government.

As we make the entrance of the lagoon, and the ocean wind roars in our ears, and the boat takes her first buoyant plunge into an immense opaline swell, I endeavour to justify the college professor's infatuation with the Battle of Lepanto, where, I remark in

parenthesis, Cervantes did himself no discredit. I take as an example this very seaboard along which we are travelling in a gasolene boat. I point out certain low jungle-clad hillocks between us and the little white village inside, and I tell Don Carlos how one Francis Drake, a hard-bitten English pirate of the seventeenth century, came up after nightfall one evening and, anchoring, rowed ashore with muffled oars and crept through the dense undergrowth until, the surprised and sleepy sentry struggling to unloose their iron grip from his throat, he and his men stood within the shadows of the stockades.

A grim tale, typical of the times, and the outcome of great events and dignified animosities half a world away. And Don Carlos laughs, for he bears no malice toward the English who flew at the throats of his ancestors for so many strenuous years. Indeed, one derives a certain consolation from the fact that, while the English experience the usual human difficulty in loving their enemies, they certainly seem to achieve success in making their enemies love them; and that is something in a fallen world. He laughs and bears no malice. He sits with his hands clasped round his knees, looking down meditatively for a moment at the spinning shaft, and then suddenly startles me by demanding if I have ever been in jail.

This is so unexpected that, as we get round the point and into smoother water, I am at a loss to see how the question bears upon my feeble attempts

to justify the study of history in a world made safe for democracy. A hasty review of an obscure and more or less blameless life enables me to disclaim the honour. But, it seems, he has. And he explains that for three weeks he was a political prisoner in the barracks up at San Benito in Costaragua. That was, oh, two years ago, and he was nineteen at the time. Just before he came to the States. And resting his arms on his knees and regarding me with his bright, smoked-hazel eyes, he relates his adventures as a political suspect.

It is essential to explain in the beginning, however, how he came to be so late in getting any ideas, as he calls it, about his country. The fact is, he ran entirely, as a child, to machinery. It assumed the dimensions of a passion, for he describes his emotions on encountering a new mechanism, and they are easily identified as a species of divine ecstasy.

As, for example, when he, a slender, quick-eyed schoolboy, stood in front of the Hotel Granada in San Benito and devoured with his eyes the first automobile ever seen in that remote capital. He waited for the owner to come out and start it, with a feeling akin to vertigo. And the owner, it appears, was an Englishman, a bulky person in knickerbockers and a monocle, prospecting, with racial rapacity, for gold. He came out and scrutinized the small, palpitating being crouched down on its hams and peering frantically under the chassis; demanded in

an enormous, gruff voice what the deuce Don Carlos was up to.

"Oh, please, can I see the motor? I've never seen a motor."

"Why should I show you my motor, eh?"

"Oh, I do want to look at it, only for a minute!"

And Don Carlos asserts that he was so worked up that he touched the rough tweed sleeve and stood on one leg.

The Englishman seemed amused at this and asked him where he learned his English. In the college, eh? Wish to the deuce his college in Oxford had taught him Spanish, confound it! Well, suppose they strike a bargain, eh? Don Carlos might wash the car if he, the owner, let him look at the motor. How about it?

He spoke to the empty air. Don Carlos had vanished into the Hotel Granada, seized a bucket and broom, and was dashing back again to start washing the car. Never was a car cleansed with such miraculous efficiency and speed.

But suppose, said the Englishman, when bucket and broom were restored to an indignant kitchen-maid, that he now declined to let Don Carlos look at the motor. Somewhat to his astonishment, the small vivacious body became still, the eyes were cast down, and he was informed in a grave voice that such a thing was impossible. But why? he insisted, keeping his cigarette away from his mouth for quite

a while in his interest. Well, remarked Don Carlos coldly, an Englishman always kept his promise—they were taught so in the college. Were they, by Jove! It was, the stranger added under his breath, news to him, for Corfield had just been butchered in Somaliland and nobody at home seemed to care. Always kept their promises, did they? And he supposed some infernal professor in the college was teaching all these Latin-American kids to regard English promises as sacred, "giving us a darned difficult reputation to live up to, young man."

Well, here goes! He raised the bonnet of his toil-worn car, and Don Carlos stooped in ecstasy to gloat over the four hot, dry cylinders, the fan, the wires, the smell of gasolene. Twenty-five horse! He mutters apologetically to me (he was only a kid, I am to remember) that he had got the silly notion into his head that there were twenty-five little horses toiling away under that hood to pull the car. But I don't think it needs any apology. I think it is beautiful, and the authentic thought of a child.

Well, he gazed and gazed, almost glaring in a desperate attempt to fix it all imperishably on his memory before the bonnet slowly descended and the vision was shut out. Don Carlos says he remembered everything so that he could draw it, even the grease-spots, and a chip off one of the spark-plugs; and raising his eyes to the green shores along which we are running, he says that he supposes I do not believe this.

On the contrary, I see no reason why I should not believe it. I tell him of the boy Mozart, who listened but once to the Vatican Mass at Rome, and came out to write it all down.

Without any mistakes? Don Carlos demands with sudden, intense energy. No, I say, he had to go back and correct one or two notes next day. Don Carlos nods and smiles in a mysterious fashion, and proceeds. He has another improbable statement to make. He says that, as the motor stuttered and roared, and the car sprang away into the dust of the Calle San Bernardino, he burst into tears.

And this is the point of the episode. His emotions as a youth were preoccupied with fascinating things like electric pumps, a broken adding-machine, learning the fiddle, and dancing with the extremely pretty girls of Costaragua. Costaragua itself had made no appeal to him. It is what can be called a difficult country in more senses than one. It is a country of immense tree-clad gorges and cloud-capped mountains, with rivers as steep as staircases and volcanoes of uncertain temper. It is a country where butterflies grow to be a foot across the wings, and mosquitoes bite to kill. It is a country with a seaboard as hot and undesirable as a West African swamp; while inland, at four thousand feet, San Benito lies spread out on a cool and pleasant plateau. It is a country, moreover, where revolutions alternate with earthquakes, and between the two a life

insurance policy runs high. And a country destitute of external oppressors and internal traditions is at a loss to make any profound impression upon a sensitive youth preoccupied with engines and girls. The appeal had to come indirectly.

From across the world came an immense rumour of war, an upheaval so vast that even in distant Costaragua life rocked uneasily. Local English, French, and Belgians drew into a group, silent and thoughtful. Neighbours with harsh names difficult for Iberian tongues to utter held little celebrations from week to week as the field-gray hordes rolled on toward Paris. And to Don Carlos, buried in a Spanish *traduction*, as he calls it, of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," and driving himself half crazy in a superhuman effort to understand just how a bird uses his wings to get off the ground, was suddenly hauled out of his dreams by the news that two of his cousins in far Provence had been cited for valour, while yet another was dead at Verdun.

It was like a galvanic shock, because valour and death in defence of one's country were to him novel conceptions. And they were his kin. He was working for the Costaragua Railroad at that time, and as he overhauled the rolling-stock he turned the matter over in his mind. They were his kin, but France was far away. His father had been killed in one of the innumerable revolutions of Costaragua. And it came upon him with abrupt clarity that dy-

ing for one's country was, after all, nothing much unless one was prepared to live for it.

This was not so simple as it may seem to one who has been drilled from infancy in the civic virtues. In Costaragua, as in most small national aggregations, family is of paramount importance. You may be poor and work in a picture-house evenings, but you do not therefore lose caste as a member of the first families. And the tendency was for all these gentry, as we would call them in England, to adhere to the Liberal faction. So the best Don Carlos could do for himself at the time, with his limited knowledge of world-politics, was to conceive a very honest enthusiasm for the government in power, and indulge in a few fantastic dreams of Costaragua as a rich and powerful country. The point to remember is that, so far as it went, it was a genuine inspiration, a solid basis on which a more fortunate turn of events might have erected a pure and passionate love for the land of his birth.

And on top of this, as if to confirm him in his new ideas, he was ordered one day to drive a special car to the coast. It was not merely his consummate skill in handling motor cars that singled him out for this honour. The railway had an ample supply of competent drivers. But they were, many of them, tinged with an unfortunate prejudice toward a stable government. The great upheaval in Europe had caused a number of persons of pronounced radical

views to take up their residence in Costaragua. The special motor car, a large and richly appointed affair in varnished mahogany and red silk curtains, with a cab in front for the driver, was destined to convey the brother of the President and the Minister for War to the coast. It was desirable, therefore, that someone of good family and undoubted fidelity be chosen to drive.

He had made the trip so often that it was nothing. The only thing that made this one any different was a novel emotion of pride in being chosen to serve the Government. Not that he had any ridiculous reverence for the President's brother. Everybody in San Benito was secretly amused at that heavy-jowled, dark-browed, secretive, and pompous personage. He had one defect which is intuitively divined by the Latin—he was stupid. When a minister from a foreign power, after a reception, had jokingly remarked on the comparative sizes of their hats, the President's brother had received with a look of blank puzzlement the remark that he had a large head. "Of course! I am the President's brother!" he observed in bewilderment. Don Carlos says the story went round behind the fans of the San Benito ladies like a ripple of phosphorescence on dark water.

Well, he was that sort of man. Quite different from the President, who was clever in many ways, with a pen, with a sword, with a revolver. In his

career as President he had frequent recourse to all three talents. He was not clever enough, however, to dispense with his gloomy brother, who held obstinately to the view that it was he who had engineered the *coup d'état* that raised the intellectual duellist to the throne. He pervaded the social atmosphere of San Benito, posing as a sort of Bismarck, and was observed to model his deportment upon that eminent political stage-manager.

This was the illustrious passenger, accompanied by a short, animated gentleman with a black, upstanding moustache, the pair of them garbed in great cloaks and heavy-brimmed hats, who stood on the private platform of the terminal station as Don Carlos brought the big vehicle to a halt. The Administrador of the line hurried up to open the door and hand in the baggage. He himself was going up to his farm in the interior for a few weeks' holiday. He hoped the trip would be pleasant. The line had been cleared of everything in advance. Once past Ensenada, where the up mail train was side-tracked for half an hour, they had a clear run into Puerto Balboa, a hundred miles distant and four thousand feet below.

II

And now, while we run the boat in toward the yellow sands of a small, sequestered beach, backed by an impenetrable tropical jungle, and wade ashore

with our clothes held high, it is necessary to give the urban dweller in a temperate zone some clear notion of this railroad over which the youthful patriot was to drive his massive Condorcet-model car. To an Englishman, whose railways have the sober permanence and social aloofness of the House of Lords, or to an American accustomed to quadruple tracks vibrating at all hours to the hammering impact of enormous haulage, this Eastern Railroad of Costaragua gives the same bizarre impression as would an impulsive Oriental dancing girl in a quiet New England sewing-circle.

Not that there is anything scandalous or reprehensible in its beginnings. The track runs quietly out of San Benito, between high, living palisades of green, through the occasional gaps of which you can get glimpses of gardens with low houses closely girdled by screened verandas. All the houses in San Benito are low, sky-scrapers being at an ominous discount in a land so insecurely bolted down. The houses are low, the roofs light, the doors made to swing easily, and the people religiously inclined. There is one city, Ortygia, through which we pass presently, once an ambitious rival of San Benito—which is dreadful to contemplate, for the houses are now tortured ruins and the cemetery is full of jostling tombs which fell in upon each other as the earth split open and crashed, and split again, and then suddenly remained rigid, so that the white head-

stones sticking out of the riven furrows look like the teeth of the grinning jaws of Fate.

But that is not yet. San Benito is built upon a gentle eminence, in the centre of a wide, fertile plateau; so that, as you stand at the intersections of her broad, pleasant streets, you can see all around the ascending rim of the green-clad mountains, with a glimpse to the eastward of that formidable personality, the crater of Mount Cornaru with his forty-mile plume of rolling smoke darkening the sunrise.

And so, if the reader can figure himself in an airplane for a moment, he might have seen, on looking down upon this peaceful country one evening, the roof of the big Condorcet bumping rapidly along the single track between the gardens and coffee farms, like a large and intelligent beetle.

But, on reaching the rim of the plateau, the character of the railroad changes with startling abruptness. It plunges into a dark cleft in the earth, and begins to twist and squirm until all sense of direction is lost. It emerges upon a perilous, spidery trestle, which is insecurely pinned to the bosom of a thousand-foot precipice. It slides athwart up-ended landscapes of a green so intense that it fatigues the eye like the lustrous sheen of an insect's wings or the translucent glazing of antique pottery. It rolls rapidly down to the very verge of a drop that leaves one spent with vertiginous amazement, and turns away into a tunnel, after giving

one a sickening and vivid view of a wrecked train half submerged in the river below. It becomes preoccupied with that river. It returns to those appalling banks with enervating persistence. It refuses to be allured by the crumbling yet comparatively safe-looking sides of Mount Cornaru, now towering on our left like the very temple of disaster. It reaches out on perilous cantilevers and swaying suspension-chains, to look into that swiftly rushing streak of silver almost lost in the gloom of the tropical canyon. It dodges declivities and protrusions, only to dart to the edge again and again. For this is the only way to Puerto Balboa, down the valley of the Corcubion River.

And now the reader must imagine night about to fall, Ortygia and Ensenada, with its side-tracked mail train impatiently tolling its bell and blowing off, left behind, and Don Carlos, in the gloom of his cab in front of the Condorcet, stepping on his accelerator and bolting headlong down the above-described permanent way. His orders were to make all possible speed—the sort of order which gives him great joy.

There was only one shadow on his mind. He was not sure that at full speed he could see a forgotten hand-car in time to pull up. One of the captivating habits of the native plate-layer is to leave his hand-car on the rails and go away into a niche of the rocks to sleep. In the ordinary day's

work the cow-catchers, one of which was securely bolted to the front of the Condorcet, would send the obstruction flying into space, and the journey would proceed unbroken. Don Carlos did not desire to take that risk with the President's brother. It might disturb his equanimity, upon which he set a most ridiculous store. But speed must be made. A conference on board a steamer lying at Puerto Balboa was booked for that night.

Don Carlos, peering out along the beam of his searchlight, which was a long white cone littered with enormous moths and startling shadows, went ahead. And then, turning into a fifty-yard straight at about fifty miles an hour he suddenly saw the dreaded hand-car right under him. There was a crunch, a jolt, a sparkle of metal crashing against metal, a shiver of glass, and the hand-car, game to the last, before shooting away and turning gracefully end over end into oblivion, lifted the front wheels of the Condorcet, so that the large and richly appointed affair waddled and reeled into the soft earth of the embankment, and halted.

Halted just in time, Don Carlos admits. He had no qualms. That is one of his characteristics—control. He darts at once, in a case of danger or difficulty, to the only possible means of recovery. He hopped out of the cab and, unhitching a thin and pliant steel cable from where it hung, he began to seek a purchase. He found it in an ebony tree not

far away, took a bend round it, rove the shackle through the dead-eye of a small barrel fitted to the Condorcet's rear axles for haulage purposes, and running back to the cab, started the engine. The wheels began to scutter and slither, the wire-rope slowly wound itself on the revolving barrel, and the heavy car began to crawl upward toward the track. To take fresh hold, to haul out a couple of ramps and lever the car into position so that one more jerk astern settled her on the rails with a bump, was the work of a few moments. And then a perspiring Don Carlos bethought him of his passengers. Thus far they had remained in enigmatic silence within the red silk curtain of the car. Don Carlos pulled open the door and peeped in. The Minister for War was sitting up, holding on with frantic energy to an ornate arm-strap. The President's brother was lying perfectly still, on his face, his head under the seat, his shoes, large number elevens, with the soles close by the door. Don Carlos pulled tentatively at one of these shoes; the owner gave a sudden hysterical wriggle and sat up, holding to his breast a bleeding finger. Don Carlos was rather alarmed. He inquired respectfully if the gentlemen were hurt, and informed them that all danger was past.

"We are not killed," said the military one with a pious aside.

"I have injured my finger," said the President's

brother with Bismarckian brevity. "There must be an inquiry into this affair."

"But it is all over," suggested Don Carlos.

"Not at all," observed the President's brother. "It is only beginning—at the inquiry."

It is not the way of Don Carlos to argue in this fashion. He has not the mentality to brood on what is past. He slammed the door, making both of his passengers jump, climbed into the cab, switched on his side-lights, and started off once more. An hour later, the car rolled into the station at Puerto Balboa, and Don Carlos stretched himself out on the red plush cushions vacated by the President's brother, and slept like a top till dawn.

And that, in the ordinary course of events, would have closed the incident, but for the attitude of the President's brother. That austere and suspicious statesman was not of the mental calibre to gauge accurately or justly the eager and swift-witted lad who had retrieved the situation. He was afflicted with a political cast of mind. He saw a sinister and deep-laid plot to assassinate the President's brother and chief military adviser. He brooded upon this idea until he saw the whole of Costaragua aquiver with hostile designs. He returned in a steam-hauled armoured car, which got derailed near Ortygia and nearly killed him in real earnest, the track having been disturbed by a large mass of rock tumbling five hundred feet and smashing a culvert.

He summoned the Chief of Police as soon as he was once more safe in San Benito, and ordered the arrest of Don Carlos as a political suspect.

There was a great to-do, he assures me, in his home, when they came for him. He was with his mother and sisters, and they began to weep. His own feelings seem to have crystallized into a species of contempt for the stupidity of the whole business. That, I fear, is his weakness. He cannot credit the sad but immovable fact that the majority of people are not at all clever, that our civilization tends to put a premium on mental density and folly. And when he was finally incarcerated in the calabozo behind the Government Buildings, he sat down and began to think and think.

III

WE LAY there on the narrow strip of hot white sand, between the dense green wall of the jungle and the glittering blue sea, and stared up into a flawless sapphire sky. And our thoughts, helped out by a lazy comment or two, were on these lines: Do our governors know as much as they should about governing? Or put it this way: Doesn't it seem as if the tendency of our Western notions is to engender useless bitterness in the hearts of the young, the unsophisticated, and the guileless? Neither of us has any very clear ideas on the subject. He, the Latin, is the more logical. "*What do you want government*

at all for?" he demands harshly; and there is a long silence, broken only by the soft kiss of the waves on the sand and the breeze stirring the tops of the mahogany trees and cocoanut palms.

In time, of course, he will see why we want government at all. He will see many things as he goes on. He may even forget the animosity born of those three weeks in jail. But the new and beautiful conception of self-dedication to his country was killed and can never be recalled. He will always be suspicious of political motives. His virtue will be without roots. That, I take it, is the problem of to-day. We have to provide a soil in which all these transplanted virtues can strike root. We have to devise a scheme that will prevent the spirited youth of the land from sitting down in bitterness, to think and think.

Of course, it must not be supposed that the son of a good family was permitted to languish in prison without comment. But, for the time, the President's brother had it all his own way. He showed his damaged finger and congratulated the Liberals on having nipped a dangerous conspiracy in the bud. Efforts to reach the Administrador were futile, he being high up in the interior beyond rail or wire. So Don Carlos sat there and formulated his plans. He might be shot, which worried him not at all. But if he got out, he would go away. That was decided for all time, as he sat there thinking of the immense number of fools in the world. His mother came to

see him, and went away frightened. There was a meeting of "the family," mother and two daughters, to discuss what should be done.

It is strange to hear from him, as he lies on the hot sand, the reasons for their concern, and his views of "the family." "I support them," he remarks gravely, "and so they have a right to know my decisions."

While I am digesting this somewhat unusual filial attitude, he goes on to describe the Administrador's sudden return, the telephone calls, carried on in shouts, between the railroad office, the police-office, and the President's house. And shortly after, Don Carlos, contemptuous as ever of stupidity, walked out and went home to his family. The Administrador was able to do this because the President had married his wife's niece and the Chief of Police was his cousin.

He came round to the house while the family were in council and announced his intention of giving Don Carlos a job on the coast. The President's brother had been advised by his physician to go into the country. Don Carlos declined the job on the coast. He said all he wanted of anybody was a ticket to the United States. The Administrador thrashed his polished leathern gaiters with his cane and looked very hard at the sullen youth in front of him. He asked if Don Carlos knew what would happen to him if he did go to the United States. The boy said he did not know, and did not care so long as he went.

Well, he, the Administrador would tell him what would happen. "You," he informed Don Carlos, pointing his cane at him, "will be a millionaire inside of ten years."

And immediately I conceive an immense respect for this bluff creature of Latin-American politics, because he has had the vision to see what he had there before him.

Don Carlos looks at him and waits for the rest of the oration, merely murmuring, "And——?"

"And you will abandon your native Costaragua for ever," continues the Administrador.

And that, says Don Carlos as we resume our journey along the coast, was true anyhow. He went to the United States, or rather New York, and he plunged into the life of the city with the naïve egotism of a traditionless expatriate. Any idea that opportunities imply responsible allegiance is not yet born. When I mention in passing that the Chief Executive at the White House is far from being what is called wealthy, he looks incredulous and inquires, "What's he president for, then?" But as we speed round a green headland, which conceals the mouth of a river, and as we start on our way up this river, I ask Don Carlos just why he prefers the States to his native Costaragua or the neighbouring Republic of Contigua. After all, I argue with the illogical folly of the English, he must have some feeling of love for the land where he was

born and grew up. Suppose, for instance, Contigua declared war on Costaragua, would he not take the first boat back home and offer himself as a sacrifice to his country? Would not Costaraguans the world over collect in great seaports, and lie and smuggle and scheme to get themselves home to enlist?

He is silent for a while, as the immense vertical green walls of the gorge, through which the river runs, close round us. And then he says soberly that a country like his does not get you that way. He is speaking a foreign language, one must remember, and he turns over various unsuitable phrases to hold his meaning. It is different. It is, very much of it, like this; and he waves his hand toward the shores.

The river winds and winds. High up above the towering cliff of eternal verdure gleams a solid blue sky like a hot stone. We are in a green gloom. The river, fabulously deep, flows without a ripple, like a sheet of old jade. There is no movement of bird or tree or animal. One is oppressed by the omnipotent energy of the vegetation which reaches down from its under-cut banks as if seeking to hold the very water from flowing away. And the crazy notion takes hold of one's mind that this sort of thing is not conducive to sanity, or morality, or patriotism, or any of the funny old-fashioned ideas that grow rather well in our northern air. One begins to understand what Don Carlos means when he says it does not get you that way.

And then I poke him up with something he has forgotten. I lead him on to see how he and his contemporaries are in the grip of machinery. He even learned English composition by means of lecture-records on a phonograph, a hoarse voice blaring at him, out of a black iron box, selections from Keats and Shelley. There is something metallic in his voice even now as he repeats from memory—

> "Hail to thee, blithe spirit,
> Bird thou never wert,
> That from heaven or near it
> Pourest thy full heart,"—

and growing cautious as he approaches the last line with its "unpremeditated art." Well, he is satisfied machinery can do everything. His mind already plays about unsolved problems of mechanism. All right, I concede. And now will he tell me, as a favour, what are we all going to do, later, when the fuel gives out?

As we approach the ship in the darkness and figures come to the rail to see us arrive, he falls silent, and I chuckle. After all, it is up to him and his like, clever young supermen, to get us out of the hole they have got us into, with their wonderful inventions. We dunderheads can go back to keeping chickens and writing poetry and watching the sunsets over blue hills, and we shall be content. But when the fuel runs out, and the machines run down,

and the furnaces are cold and dead, and the wheels stop turning, what then, O wonderful youth, what then? Will you harness volcanoes and the tides? Will you contrive great burning glasses, and turn the alkali deserts into enormous storage batteries? or will you fly away in planes to some other planet where there is an abundance of fuel and no fools at all?

At which Don Carlos laughs and says I have plenty of ideas. That, indeed, is his solution of the problem. He is not afraid so long as we continue to have ideas.

And so I leave him at the gangway and climb up to the smooth, brilliantly lighted decks, where the ladies and gentlemen of many races recline in deck-chairs, or promenade to and fro. There is no doubt, I reflect, that the Administrador's prophecy will come true. He will be rich by virtue of his ideas, and a leader of men by virtue of his personality. He is for ever dissociated from us, who toil and fail and toil again, until we achieve some pitiful travesty of our dreams. He functions, as we say, perfectly. But what will he do, I wonder, when the fuel of life runs down?

THE ARTIST PHILOSOPHER

IT WAS Francis Grierson, some years ago, in a brief article in the *New Age*, who first called attention to the very remarkable qualities of a book called "The Nigger of the Narcissus," just then published by Heinemann at a shilling. It was a slim, scarlet, easily held book, designed to read in bed, pack in a grip, lend to a friend, or slip in the pocket against a rail journey in the middle of the day, when the morning paper had been read and the evening journals were not yet on the stands. It may have been by design that this article came out just at that moment, for Heinemann was an admirable tactician. Bad literature was abhorrent to him, as may be seen by the books bearing his imprimatur; but he doubtless saw no reason why a man who published fine books should not let it get about, or should refrain from mentioning it in a friendly way. It may be remarked that a number of English publishers at that time were in the habit of issuing books in a manner that can only be described as virtuously surreptitious. They did good by stealth. It would not do to say that any house ever published a book without informing its shipping

department, but it amounted to that in the long run. Mr. Heinemann was not that sort of publisher. Francis Grierson's article appeared in the *New Age;* the slim red book appeared in the book stores; and a new light shone before the present writer. For the first time in his life he became aware of the existence of a writer named Conrad.

It was an extraordinary experience. It was also a very chastening one. For the present writer had not only written but published a book of his own, dealing with the sea and with seamen. He had grown up in a genuine tradition of the mercantile marine. Sea captains had been so close to him all his life that he accepted them as part of the surrounding landscape. A long period of literary and artistic gestation in Chelsea had somewhat alienated him from the rich humanity of his seafaring relatives. And here in "The Nigger of the Narcissus" he found them again transfigured to heroic dimensions, like the sombre and enormous shadows of grown-ups on the nursery wall.

It was in Glasgow on an evening in late summer that the present writer walked along Sauchiehall Street and, turning down Radnor and Finniestonn streets, entered the Queen's Dock, where his ship lay. "The Nigger of the Narcissus" was under his arm. The rays of the setting sun still threw a twilight and roseate glamour over the interminable ridge of the Hills of Old Kilpatrick; and with the

story of the "Nigger" yet vibrating in his brain, he made his way up the gangway and descended the short ladder to the iron deck of the elderly freighter. It is not too much to say that he regarded her shapely old hull and comfortable quarters with profound affection. Built some fifteen years before for the nine-knot Australian trade, she was now relegated to the shorter voyages to the Mediterranean. We had been a long time together, commander, mates, engineers, including the donkeyman, the carpenter, and the engine-storekeeper. The last three were much more like the characters in a dream play than quick active seamen. The donkeyman was a Turk and lived in a sort of solitary and immaculate retirement in a three-cornered cabin in the forecastle. The carpenter was a Norwegian, and haunted the steering-house aft, where he shut himself up and fashioned models of fabulous sailing ships. The storekeeper, who owned to the entirely inadequate name of Frank Freshwater, was a willing and diminutive Englishman with a large nose and an immense military moustache. He was known to speak to both donkeyman and Chips, and in fact may have been created for the sole purpose of communicating between them; but even that degree of loquacity dried up on nearing Glasgow. He was the sad proprietor of a ferocious virago who would appear on the quay with miraculous promptitude the moment the gangway slid over, and wait relentlessly for him

to appear. He never did appear, it is necessary to add. The whole ship's company became enthusiastic sporting accessories to the fact of poor old Freshwater's unobtrusive escape, while some hardened married man goaded the virago to paroxysms of absurd rage, until the dock policeman walked stolidly in our direction, preening his moustache.

And the principal bond between all of us there on that ship was a very honest liking for the Chief. The Turk once said to the present writer who was second engineer at the time, "*Ze cheef, ee iz my fazzer*"—and was so prostrated with that display of dramatic and emotional volubility that he did not speak again for a fortnight—unless he talked to himself. To Frank Freshwater the Chief presented another and equally admirable facet: "One of the truest men who ever stood in shoe-leather." Frank's estimate is quoted because it was a very accurate description. The Chief was just that. And as the present writer came aboard with "The Nigger of the Narcissus" under his arm, he beheld the burly form of the Chief, standing by the door of the port alleyway, stripped to the waist, his large, pale, hairy arms folded, his bosom screened from view by his patriarchal beard, smoking a cigarette in the end of a long black holder.

"Well," said he, taking the holder from his lips and looking down at the great curve of his abdomen, "did you have a good time?"

Simple words, expressing a simple kindly considera-

tion; yet by virtue of the magical tale just read, the present writer saw those words in a new and enchanting light. He saw perhaps for the first time in his literary life the true function of dialogue as a resonant and plangent element through which the forms and characters of men can be projected upon the retina of the reader. He became aware of a more subtle music in the very shape and timbre of the long-familiar phrases. And behind the amiable superior and valuable shipmate he suddenly saw that quiet, attentive, bearded man as a character in a book, the unconscious victim of a future work of art.

This is a great stride in life—to get behind the switchboard, as one may say, and see even for a brief illuminating moment the various resistances and insulations, the connection to earth, without which one's impact upon humanity is a floating foolish pose. The author who does this for you is for ever memorable, quite apart from his intrinsic value to the public.

I said, "Yes, I had a good time." And I added with a curious feeling of diffident exultation, "I have a book here I would like you to read. It seems to me rather good."

He took it and at once made that faint and somewhat vague gesture which invariably accompanied a gentle murmur of apology about his glasses. Turning to the low door leading to his room, we passed in. There was no dynamo on that ship, and a study-

lamp with a brown shade stood on a little desk by the settee. Adjusting a pair of spectacles on his nose, the Chief opened the book and began to read the title-page. He stood there—a remarkable nude figure with his shining bald head and venerable beard—holding the volume at arm's length and looking down through his glasses with severe attention. The first page and the second were read and turned, and he never moved.

So I left him and went round to my cabin on the starboard side. The ship was moving under the coal-tips early next morning, and it was due to this that some time after midnight I was still about, and noticed the light still burning in his room. I went in. He was standing there turning the last immortal pages. He had put on an old patrol coat and had buttoned it absently over his beard. I have often thought that Conrad must have met him somewhere: he is so exactly presented in "Heart of Darkness" as the amiable engineer of the river boat who put his beard in a bag to keep it clean. The discerning will recall that person's bald head, whose hair—Conrad whimsically observes—had fallen to his chin, where it had prospered. He lowered his head and looked at me over his glasses as I made some professional remark, and laid the book down.

"A funny thing," he observed in his quiet precise voice. "This nigger says a girl chucked the third engineer of a Rennie boat for him." He stroked his

beard with a broad powerful palm. "You know, *I* was third of a Rennie boat in my young days." He meditated for a moment and added, "That book makes you feel, somehow."

A notable reflection.

And as time went on it became a habit of the present writer to experiment on his shipmates by noting their reactions to the works of Conrad. The point to remember is that, neglecting certain easily explained failures, men reacted in direct ratio to their integrity of character. The cunning, the avaricious, and the ignoble are not admirers of Conrad. There is something in the style and the spirit which reaches surely and inexorably down into a man's moral resources and sounds them for him. To those who in the jargon of the red-blooded fraternity want a story, it is to be feared our author does not appeal. This was exemplified by "Typhoon" which was tried upon a naval reserve officer, a brisk efficient resourceful young man with an acute "examination brain." His criticism was brief and emphatic. "You could write the whole story on a couple of sheets of foolscap," he grumbled. "There's nothing to it; too far-fetched as well." He shut the book with a sudden snap of fingers and thumb, and passed it back, promptly forgetting the whole affair. He is neither cunning, avaricious, nor ignoble, but he is afflicted with the modern conception of efficiency. For him romance lies in the past of highwaymen, knights in

shining armour, and Machiavellian cardinals of inconceivable obliquity.

To a writer who has indulged his humour by watching seafaring folk in their reactions as mentioned above, the collected prefaces which Conrad has written for the Sun Dial edition of his works, under the title of "Notes of My Books," have a very special interest. They tell with a direct and disarming candour the authentic origin of the tales. The troublesome enthusiast who is for ever seeking the fiction which is "founded on fact" will get small comfort here, for here are the facts. It is the penalty of success in the fictional art to illumine the obscure experiences of worthy members of the public and convince them that such and such an affair "actually happened." These folk are very timid at trying their wings. They dread leaving the solid earth behind. It is a positive comfort to them to feel that the things which have touched their hearts are only the bright shadows of the hard actualities under their feet. The chief engineer to whom I presented "Lord Jim" (not the beloved and bearded personality described above), was an interesting variant of this. A hard-bitten portly individual, an excellent officer, and well read withal, he deprecated in its entirety the Conradian philosophy and literary method. Yes, he knew the story out East, as did everybody else. A ship called the *Jeddah*, it was, which ran over a sunken derelict

and broke her back. The officers left her. Who wouldn't? A million chances to one against her lasting ten minutes. Conrad had idealized the mate Jim, that was all.

That was the word he used: "idealized." He was a blunt Englishman, with his emotions planted almost inaccessibly deep down among his racial prejudices. He objected really to anybody's discussing the fundamental motives of man. It was not the thing to do. Possibly the slight imponderable irony which almost always creeps into Conrad's descriptions of seagoing engineers, was responsible for my friend's irritation. Leaving out the worthy Solomon Rout in "Typhoon," Conrad seems to have been something less than fortunate in his engineer types.

At the other end of the scale the present writer preserves a most lively memory of his introduction to "Youth" by the third mate of a beef ship running into London River. An alert and cheerful college boy who had been through the hard gruelling of an apprenticeship in sail, he was at that stage of the twenties when one is equally interesting to the women of thirty, the men of forty, and the mothers of fifty. And it was he who, as we were passing the watch below in friendly comparison of books read, suddenly lighted up all over his fresh ruddy features and said in a glow of delicious enthusiasm, "I say, haven't you read 'Youth'? My word, but you

must read 'Youth'! It's ripping! The finest tale I ever read in my life!"

And he stuck to it in spite of anything the others might say. He had been caught by the extraordinary glamour of the thing, the superb simplicity of the narrative, the cumulative power of the finale. He would never be the same being again after reading that tale. Here we have an achievement for which there is no adequate name save genius.

Other books there are of Conrad's which enshrine no memories of a shipmate's admiration or dislike. There is "Nostromo" for instance, that little-read masterpiece of creative literature. Ordered from London during the war, and read while voyaging between Port Said and Saloniki, this "tale of a seaboard" made the monotonous business of naval transport seem a dim and ridiculous fragment of unreality. The huge size of the canvas, the sweep and surge of the narrative, the sudden revealing phrases, the balanced cadence of the sentences, the single harp notes calling to some obscure emotion of the soul—all these made their appeal and created an imperishable memory.

And there is a point it is pertinent to make here, in view of this new volume of "Notes on Life and Letters": that it is doing Conrad a disservice to characterize him as " a sea writer." One does not call Turner a sea painter. The highest genius does not shackle itself with such very trivial restrictions.

Some of the finest of Conrad's tales have nothing whatever to do with the sea, notably "Heart of Darkness," "Under Western Eyes," and "An Outcast of the Islands." If it be not misunderstood, the present writer would like to say that going to sea will have had very little influence upon the final verdict of posterity upon Conrad's work. His philosophy is his own and fundamentally antagonistic to the ideas of most seafarers. His technical method is provoking to seamen, who have a very different fashion of telling a tale—as different in fact as the average ship master is from Charlie Marlow. There is, as Conrad himself remarks, nothing speculative in a sailor's mentality. The meaning of his story is on the outside. Conrad is entirely speculative. He tells the story almost in absence of mind. He will bring you right up to a moment of almost unendurable dramatic intensity and then devote half a dozen pages to depicting the psychological phenomena attendant upon it. We who are gathered here consider the labour justified by the unique results. The red-blooded folk whose conception of drama is as rudimentary as the struggle to enter a crowded subway train, are naïvely infuriated when deprived of their precious story. There are classes of novel readers who will not have Conrad at any price. They lack patience and are not compensated by any perfection of prose diction which may inadvertently come under their

notice. For them the donkeyman, the carpenter, and storekeeper, mentioned earlier in this essay, were simply taciturn nonentities. For us they are a bizarre trinity of lonely souls floating in mysterious proximity through a universe of ironic destinies. For us they are the indistinct shadows of men like Axel Heyst, Captain MacWhirr, and Falk.

The present writer feels a special debt of gratitude for these "Notes on Life and Letters" since they include a number of fugitive pieces, occasional contributions to reviews, which he missed at the time, owing to being in some distant harbour. There is the very indignant disgression, for example, upon the loss of the *Titanic*. And it is worthy of note that when he deigns to speak of his contemporaries, Conrad is exasperatingly unaware of the existence of the gods in the best-selling universe. He has much to say, on the contrary, of Henry James, of Dostoyevsky, and of Anatole France. These articles are exactly what one would expect from the author: urbane and dignified criticism of one artist by another. Conrad has been honoured similarly by H. G. Wells, whose review of "Almayer's Folly" and "An Outcast of the Islands" was a masterpiece of critical insight.

Yet one returns again to the Prefaces. One has here the feeling of being shown round the studio by the master. This, he seems to say, is exactly how

it was done. He deprecates gently, and one hopes sincerely, the formidable accretion of legendary romanticism which has collected about his career. We are to believe that these people in his books never actually existed—they are the magnificent fabrications of the author's brain. A hint here, a whispered conversation there, a newspaper yarn over yonder—and lo! fifteen years later Willems or Falk or Razumov or Nostromo emerges from obscurity and assumes an enigmatic attitude of having existed since the dawn of time. This will be very disappointing to those prosaic enthusiasts who like to hear that all great characters in fiction have their originals in history. And the present writer must confess he had weakly imagined that "The Secret Agent" was the happy result of a long-past familiarity with the strange folk who hang around legations and live in disreputable lodgings off Greek Street or the Vauxhall Bridge Road.

And yet of what avail are these prying speculations? There seems still to survive in us much of that ghoulish predilection of the Middle Ages for relics. We will go to a museum to look with veneration upon the authentic trinkets of the illustrious dead. So in these "Notes on My Books" one must resist the temptation to linger over the personal revelations with vulgar curiosity. They are for our information and comfort, but they hold no anodyne for pain or elixir of youth whereby we may

regain our lost illusions. They must in no case divert our attention from one preface in particular—a preface set apart by virtue of its history and intention. It would be much more just to call it the confession of faith of a supreme master of prose. The present writer is unable to speak of it without emotion. It enshrines in resonant and perfect phrases the secret convictions of his heart. It is the crowning gift of a great artist; and when one pauses to condense in a few words an adequate comprehension of that artist's work, one turns instinctively to this long-suppressed preface to "The Nigger of the Narcissus." As one reads, one recalls. The literary art, he says,

> . . . must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music, which is the art of arts. And it is only through complete unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance; it is only through an unremitting, never-discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to colour and that the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words: of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage.

And again, of the writer:

> He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain; to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation—and to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the lonliness of innumerable hearts, to be solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn.

So he sums it up. Beyond this, in placing the bounds of the author's art, it is impossible to go. One is permitted only to add, for the purpose of supplying a fitting conclusion, the final paragraph. The humble and industrious among us may smile incredulously, yet toil on with a better heart, when they read that our aim should be

> . . . to arrest, for the space of a breath, the hands busy about the work of the earth, and compel men entranced by the sight of distant goals to glance for a moment at the surrounding vision of form and colour, of sunshine and shadows; to make them pause for a look, for a sigh, for a smile—such is the aim, difficult and evanescent and reserved only for a very few to achieve. But sometimes, by the deserving and the fortunate even that task is accomplished. And when it is accomplished —behold!—all the truth of life is there: a moment of vision, a sigh, a smile—and the return to an eternal rest.

A PORT SAID MISCELLANY

I

THERE has come upon us, suddenly, one of those inexplicable lulls which make the experienced seafarer in the Mediterranean recall bygone voyages out East. It is as if the ship had run abruptly into some sultry and airless chamber of the ocean, a chamber whose cobalt roof has shut down tight, and through which not a breath is moving. The smoke from the funnel, of a sulphurous bronze colour, even while our trail yet lies somnolent in a long smear on the horizon, now goes straight to the zenith. The iron bulwarks are as hot as hand can bear, as the westering sun glows full upon the beam. Under the awnings the troops lie gasping on their rubber sheets, enduring silently and uncomprehendingly, like dumb animals.

Far ahead, the escort crosses and recrosses our course. Still farther ahead, a keen eye can detect a slight fraying of the taut blue line of the horizon. Signals break from the escort and are answered from our bridge. I turn to a sergeant who is shambling to and fro by the machine-room door, and inform him that Port Said is in sight, and that he will be in harbour in an hour or so.

And then, just as suddenly as we entered, the door of that heated chamber of the sea opens and we pass out into a warm humid wind. The wind and the news wake everybody. The soldiers, who have encamped on our after deck during the voyage, suddenly display a feverish activity. Rations are packed, rifles are cleaned, and I am in the full tide of popular favour because I permit oil-reservoirs to be replenished in the machine room and furnish those priceless fragments of old emery cloth which give such a delectable and silvery gloss to the bolts. Later, I am so popular that I could almost stand for Parliament, for I tell the sergeant that each man may fill his water-bottle with iced water. Which they proceed to do at once, so that said water gets red-hot before the moment of disembarkation!

But take a look at these men on our after deck while we are coming up to Port Said. You have never seen them before and you will not see them again, for they are bound for Bagdad and beyond. They are very representative, for they are of all ages, races, and regiments. They are going to join units which have been transferred. Three were hours in the water when their ship was torpedoed. Several have come overland across France and Italy, and got most pleasantly hung up at entrancing cities on the way. Others have come out of hospitals and trenches in Macedonia and France and Flanders.

They are Irish, Scottish, Welsh, and English. The sergeant, now thumbing a worn pocket-book, has seen service in India, China, Egypt, and France.

Behind him on the hatch, is a boy of eighteen who wears the uniform of the most famous regiment in the British Army. He is small for his age, and he has a most engaging smile. When I asked him how on earth he got into the Army he explained that he had "misriprisinted his age." He has a chum, a gaunt Highlander, who scarcely opened his lips all the voyage, and who sat on the hatch sewing buttons on their clothes, darning their stockings, and reading a religious pamphlet entitled "Doing it Now."

There is another sergeant, too, a young gentleman going home to get a commission. He is almost to be described as one apart, for he holds no converse with the others. He walks in a mincing way, he has a gold watch with a curb-chain on one wrist, a silver identification plate and a silver slave-bangle from Saloniki on the other, and an amethyst ring on one of his fingers. As the Chief Engineer said to me one day, he needed only a spear and a ring through his nose to be a complete fighting man. However, in this war it is unwise to make snap judgments. I understand that this young gentleman has an aptitude for certain esoteric brain-work of vast use in artillery. He never goes near the firing-line at all. Our young friend Angus

MacFadden has that job. When the young gentleman with the slave-bangle and gold-mounted fountain pen and expensive Kodak has figured out certain calculations in his dug-out office, Angus, who resembles an extremely warlike bell-hop, with his gaunt Highland chum beside him, will scramble up out of his trench, make a most determined rush toward a given point, and, in short, complete the job, whatever it may be.

Now it is all very well to talk about the triumphs of mind over matter, but my interest is not with the young gentleman at all. He may carry Omar Khayyam in his kit. He may call the "Shropshire Lad" "topping poetry." He may (as he does) borrow Swinburne from my book-shelf. My interest is with Angus and his chums. I look out of my machine-room window and watch them getting ready to disembark. They are very amusing, with their collapsible aluminium pannikins, their canvas wash-basins and buckets, their fold-up shaving tackle and telescopic tooth-brushes.

There is one tough old private of the Old Army among them. He has the Egyptian and two South African medals. He never seems to have any kit to bother him. I see him in the galley, peeling potatoes for their dinner, deep in conversation with the pantry-man and smoking an Irish clay. He knows all the twenty-one moves, as we say. Then there is a very young man who reads love-stories

all the time, a rosy-cheeked lad with the Distinguished Service Medal ribbon on his tunic.

Another, almost as young, is tremendously interested in refrigeration. He comes into my engine-room and stares in rapt incredulity at the snow on the machine. "I don't see why it doesn't melt!" he complains, as if he had a grievance. "How *do* you freeze? if it isn't a rude question."

I explain briefly how we utilize the latent heat of reëvaporation peculiar to certain gaseous media, in order to reduce the temperature. He turns on me with a rush of frankness and bursts out, "But, you know, that's all Greek to me!" Well, I suggest, his soldiering's all Greek to me, come to that. He laughs shortly, with his eyes on the ever-moving engines, and says he supposes so. By and by he begins to talk of his experiences in Macedonia. He thinks the sea is beautiful, after the bare hot gulches and ravines. He is so fair that the sun has burned his face and knees pink instead of brown. I ask him what he was doing before the war, and he says his father has a seed farm in Essex and he himself was learning the business.

Meanwhile we have arrived at Port Said. The engines stop and go astern violently, the pilot comes alongside in a boat and climbs the rope ladder. Just ahead is the breakwater, with a couple of motor patrols keeping guard over the fairway. Our escort puts on speed and goes in, for her job with us is done.

She has gone in to coal, and she will be ready in a few hours to take another transport out. She and her sisters are like us—they are never through. The big ships may lie for days, or even weeks, in harbour. We small fry have to hurry. Back and forth we ply without ceasing. Sometimes we run ashore in our haste, and so make less speed. Sometimes we smash into each other in the dark, and have to stagger back to port and refit with all possible expedition. Sometimes, too, we go out and never come back, and nobody save the authorities and our relatives hears anything about it. To what end? Well—and herein lies my interest in those soldiers of the King on the after deck—the one ultimate object we have in view is to get Master Angus MacFadden and his chums into that front-line trench, to keep them there warm and fed, and fully supplied with every possible assistance when they climb over the parapet to make the aforesaid rush. Everything else, when you come to think of it, is subordinate to that.

The ship goes at half speed now past the breakwater, a long gray finger pointing northward from the beach. Half way along we pass the De Lesseps statue on its high pedestal, the right hand flung out in a grandiose gesture toward the supreme achievement of his life. The warm wind from the westward is sending up the sea to break in dazzling white foam on the yellow sand below the pink and blue and brown bathing-huts. The breakwater is crowded

with citizens taking the air, for the walks of Port Said are restricted and flavoured with the odours of Arabian domesticity. We pass on, and the hotels and Custom-House buildings come into view. All around are the transients of the ocean, anchored and for a moment at rest. Past the Canal Building we steam, a pretentious stucco affair with three green-tiled domes and deep Byzantine galleries. Past also Navy House, a comely white building in the Venetian style, recalling the Doge's Palace—an illusion heightened by the fleet of patrols anchored in front, busily getting ready to go out to work.

And then we stop, and manœuvre, and go astern; tugs whistle imperiously, motor-boats buzz around us, ropes are hurriedly ferried across to buoys and quays, and we are made fast and pulled into our berth alongside of an immense vessel which has come from the other side of the world with frozen meat to feed Master Angus and his chums. But by this time it is dark. The ochreous sheen on the sky behind Port Said is darkening to purple and violet, the stars are shining peacefully over us, and the sergeant comes to ask for a lantern by which to finish packing his kit.

It has been warm during the day, but now it is stifling. We are, as I said, close alongside a great ship. She extends beyond us and towers above us, and even the warm humid breeze of Port Said in August is shut out from us. Up from below comes

a suffocating stench of hot bilge. The ship is invaded by a swarm of Arab cargo-men, who begin immediately to load us from our neighbour. Cargo lights, of a ghastly blue colour, appear at the hatchways. Angus and his chums take up their kits and fall in on the bridge deck. Officers hurry to and fro. Hatches are taken off, and the cold air of the holds comes up in thin wisps of fog into the tropic night. Winches rattle. Harsh words of French and Arabic commingle with the more intelligible shouts of the ship's officers. All night this goes on. All night proceeds this preposterous traffic in frozen corpses, amid the dim blue radiance of the cargo-clusters. Hundreds upon hundreds of frozen corpses!

I go off watch at eight and, seated in a room like a Turkish bath, I try to concentrate on the letters which have come over the sea. I am seized with a profound depression, arising, I suppose, from the bizarre discrepancy between the moods communicated by the letters and my own weariness. Most letters are so optimistic in tone. They clap one on the back and give one breezy news of the flowers in New Jersey gardens, of the heat in New Orleans, of bombs in London and reunions in English houses. All very nice; but I have to get up at two, and the thermometer over my bunk is now registering a hundred Fahrenheit. An electric fan buzzes and snaps in the corner and seems only to make the air hotter. An Arab passes in the alleyway outside and

calls to some one named Achmet in an unmelodious howl. (All male Arabs are named Achmet apparently.)

I sit in my pajamas, with the letters in my hand and wonder how long it is going to last. Another week or so and we shall have had two years of it. Most of us have gone home on leave. Counting the Commander, there are—let me see—four of us left of the original crowd. It is over a year since I applied for leave. Nothing will come of it. I look into the future and see myself, a gray elderly failure, still keeping a six-hour shift on a Mediterranean transport, my life spent, my friends and relatives all dead, Angus and his chums gone west, and a new generation coming out, with vigorous appetites for fresh provisions.

And then the door opens and lets in a slight uniformed figure with a grip in his hand and a familiar smile on his face. Lets in also liberty, freedom, pay-day, England, Home, and Beauty.

It is my relief, arrived at last!

II

We greet each other shyly, for the Chief and some of the others are standing in the alleyway, with broad grins on their faces at my look of flabbergasted bewilderment. An Arab porter comes along with a big canvas bag of dunnage, which he dumps at our feet.

"Why—what—how—when—did you get here?" I ask weakly.

"Train from Alexandria," he replies, sitting down on the settee.

My kitten, a sandy little savage known as O. Henry, jumps up and begins to make friends. O. Henry is stroked and tickled, and Tommy looks up at me with his old tolerant, bland, imperturbable smile.

"You, of all people!" I remark, looking at him inanely.

"Aye, they sent me out," he affirms. "They told me you were here. How's things?"

The others go away, still smiling, and I shut the door. For this young chap, who has come across Europe to relieve me, is an old shipmate. We were on the *Merovingian*. We have been many voyages to Rio and the Plate. We were always chums. In some obscure fashion, we got on. Tommy is North Country—dry, taciturn, reticent, slow to make friends. He abhors bluffers. I like him. We have never written, though, for it is a fact that some friendships do not "carry" in a letter. They are like some wines—they do not travel. For all I knew, I was never to see him again. What of that? We had been chums and we understood each other. I had often thought of him since I'd been out here —a good little shipmate. And now here he was, on my settee, smiling and tickling O. Henry just

where he likes to be tickled, and asking me to come ashore with him.

Will I come ashore with him? Will I not? I drag open drawers, fling out a white drill suit, and begin to dress. I open the door and shout to the messman to go and get a boat and bring my shoes and some hot water. While I shave, Tommy relates his adventures in a sketchy way. He has no gift of tongues, but now and again he strikes out a phrase that brings the picture before me. He has been torpedoed. He was in the *Malthusian* when she was "plugged." He was on watch, of course—Thirds always are on watch when anything happens. I used to tell him that he was the original of Browning's "Shadowy Third," he is so small, with delicate hands and that charming, elusive, shadowy smile.

Oh, I remark, as I reach for the talcum powder, he was torpedoed, was he? He nods and smiles at O. Henry's trick of falling off the settee, head over heels. And the poor old *Malthusian* too—what a box of tricks she was, with her prehistoric pumps and effervescent old dynamo—gone at last, eh? Tommy says nothing about the catastrophe save that he lost his gear. Then, he observes, he joined the *Polynesian* as Third, having, of course, got himself fresh gear. Ah, and had I heard about the *Polynesian?* She's gone too, he said, letting O. Henry down to the floor by his tail. What? Torpedoed too? It must be a sort of habit with him.

Good Heavens! But no, says Tommy, she was attacked, but she got away, and——

"It was a funny thing," he adds meditatively; and looks at me as though he couldn't make it out.

"What," I ask, "what happened?" as I look round for my stick and cigar-case.

"Oh, I'll tell you when we get ashore," he says; and he rolls O. Henry into a ball and drops him on my bunk.

"Come on, then. Sam! Got that boat?"

A negro voice howls, "Yes, sah," and we go out and down the ladder.

A three-quarter moon is coming up, hangs now over Palestine, and Port Said, the ancient Pelusium, takes on a serene splendour inconceivable to those who have seen her only in the hard dusty glare of noon-day. The harsh outlines of the ships soften to vague shadows touched with silver; the profound gloom within the colonnades of the Canal building, the sheen of the moonlight on green domes and gray stucco walls make of it a fairy palace of mist and emerald. Each motor-launch speeding past leaves a broadening, heaving furrow of phosphorescence. Each dip of our oars breaks the dark water into an incredible swirl of boiling greenish-white radiance.

Tommy and I sit side by side in the stern in silence as the Arab boatman, in blue gown and round white cap, pulls us up to the Custom-House

quay. We pass out at a side gate and find ourselves in Egyptian darkness. Whether this is due to military exigencies or to a shortage of fuel, nobody seems to know. The hotel buildings along the front throw their shadows right across the Sharia el Tegera, down which we pass until we reach the broad dusty Rue el Nil, a boulevard running straight down to the sea. We are bound for the Eastern Exchange Hotel, familiarly known as "The Eastern." It is the grand rallying-point of mariners east and west of Suez. It is a huge gaunt structure of glass and iron, built over to the curb of the street, and the arcade under it is full of green chairs and tables, green shrubs in enormous tubs, and climbing plants twined about the iron stanchions. The lights are shrouded in green petroleum cans, and one has the illusion of sitting in the glade of some artificial forest. Hotel waiters, in long white robes cut across with brilliant scarlet sashes, and surmounted by scarlet fezes, move noiselessly to and fro with trays of drinks. An orchestra, somewhere beyond, plays a plaintive air.

All around are uniforms—naval and military, British, French, Italian, and so forth. It is here, I say, that East and West do meet. Here the skipper from Nagasaki finds an old shipmate just in from New Orleans. Here a chief engineer, burned brown and worn thin by a summer at Basra, drinks with a friend bound east from Glasgow to Rangoon.

Here the gossip of all the ports of the Seven Seas changes hands over the little tables under the dim green-shaded lights. Outside, beyond the screen of verdure, a carriage will go by stealthily in the dust, a cigar glowing under the hood. Itinerant salesmen of peanuts in glass boxes, beads, Turkish delight, postals, cigarettes, news-sheets, postage stamps, and all the other passenger junk, pass to and fro. A native conjurer halts as we sit down, sadly produces a dozen lizards from an apparently empty fez, and passes on as I look coldly upon his peripatetic legerdemain. Here and there parties of residents sit round a table—a French family, perhaps, or Italian, or Maltese, or Greek, or Hebrew, or Syrian—for they are all to be found here in Pelusium, the latter making money out of their conquerors, just as, I dare say, they did in Roman times. Papa is smoking a cigarette; Mamma is sitting back surveying the other denizens of the artificial forest through her lorgnon; the young ladies converse with a couple of youthful "subs" in khaki, and a bare-legged boy, in an enormous pith hat like an inverted bath, is haggling over half a piastre with a vendor of peanuts. Tommy and I sit in the shadow of a shrub and I order gin and lime-juice. He wants beer, but there is no beer—only some detestable carbonated bilge-water at half a dollar (ten piastres) the bottle.

And soldiers go by continually to and from the

cafés and canteens. Many are Colonials, and their wide-brimmed hats decorated with feathers give them an extraordinarily dissipated air. There is something very un-English about these enormous, loose-limbed, rolling fighting men, with their cheeks the colour of raw beef and their truculent eyes under their wide hats. They remind me at times of the professional soldiers of my school-days, who dressed in scarlet and gold and were a race apart. As they pass us, in twos and threes and singly, slouching and jingling their spurs, and roll off into darkness again I think of Master Angus MacFadden and his chums, and I wonder what the future holds for us all. Then I hear Tommy talking and I began to listen.

No use trying to tell the story as he told it. Whoever thinks he can is the victim of an illusion. Tommy's style, like his personality, is not literary. I often wonder, when I think of the sort of life he has led, how he comes to express himself at all. For he often startles me with some queer semi-articulate flash of intuition. A direct challenge to Life! As when he said, looking up at me as we leaned over the bulwarks and watched the sunrise one morning in the Caribbean, "Yo' know, I haven't *had* any life."

Well, as I said, he and I are chums on some mysteriously taciturn, North Country principle that won't bear talking about! And I must tell the

story in my own way, merely quoting a phrase now and then. I owe him that much because, you see, he was there.

III

THAT voyage he made in the *Polynesian* was her usual London-to-South-American-ports. And nothing happened until they were homeward bound and making Ushant. It was a glorious day, as clear as it ever is in northern waters, and the Third Mate was astonished to see through his glasses what he took to be land. Ushant already! As he looked he saw a flash and his wonder deepened. He told himself, well, he'd be blowed. A tremendous bang a hundred yards abeam of the *Polynesian* nearly shook him overboard. It had come at last, then!

The Old Man came from his room, running sideways, his face set in a kind of spasm, and stood by the rail, clutching it as if petrified. The Third Mate, a friend of Tommy's, pointed and handed the binoculars just in time for the Old Man to see another flash. The mooring telegraph clanged and jangled. The Third Mate ran to the telphone and was listening, when the second shell, close to the bows, exploded on the water and made him drop the receiver. Then he heard the Old Man order the helm over—over—over, whirling his arm to emphasize the vital need of putting it hard over. A few moments of tense silence, and then, with a roar that nearly

split all their ear-drums, the *Polynesian's* six-inch anti-raider gun loosed off at nine thousand yards.

So you must envisage this obscure naval engagement on that brilliant summer day in the green Atlantic. Not a ripple to spoil the aim, not a cloud in the sky, as the two gunners, their sleeves rolled to the shoulders, their bodies heaving, thrust a fresh shell and cartridge into the breech, shoved in the cap, and swung the block into place with the soft "cluck" of steel smeared with vaseline. As the ship veers, the gun is trained steady on the gray dot. Nine thousand and fifty, no deflection—"Stand away!" There is another roar, and the gunner who has stood away now stands with his feet apart, his elbows out, staring with intense concentration through his glasses.

Down below, the engine-room staff, which included Tommy doing a field-day on the spare generator, were clustered on the starting platform. The expansion links had been opened out full—any locomotive driver will show you what I mean—and the *Polynesian's* engines, four thousand seven hundred horse-power indicated, driven by steam at two hundred pounds to the square inch from her four Scotch boilers, were turning eighty-nine revolutions per minute and making very good going for her, but nothing to write home about, when a modern submersible cruiser doing sixteen knots on the surface was pelting after her. The tremendous

explosions of the six-inch gun discouraged conversation.

The Chief Engineer, a tall man with a full chestnut moustache and a stern contemptuous expression born of his hatred of sea-life, was striding up and down the plates. The Second appeared, like Ariel, around, above, below, intent on sundry fidgets of his own, and whistling—nobody knew why. The Fourth was in the stokehold and back in the engine-room every ten minutes. The Fifth, as though he had been naughty and was being punished by that stern man with the four gold-and-purple rings on his sleeve, was standing with his face to the wall, big rubber navy phone-receivers on his ears and his eyes fixed in a rapt saintly way on two ground-glass discs above him, one of which was aglow and bore the legend *More Revolutions*. The other, *Less Revolutions*, was dull and out of use. So he stood, waiting for verbal orders.

All the revolutions possible were being supplied, for the safety-valves were lifting with an occasional throaty flutter. Unexpectedly the Second would appear from the tunnel, where he had been feeling the stern gland, and would hover lovingly over the thrust-block, whistling, amid the clangour of four thousand seven hundred horse-power: "Love me, and the world is mine."

Suddenly all was swallowed up, engulfed, in one heart-shattering explosion on deck. It was so tre-

mendous that the Fifth's head involuntarily darted out from the receivers and he looked sharply at the Chief, who was standing stock-still with his long legs apart, his hands in his coat pockets, staring over his shoulder with stern intentness into vacancy. The telephone bell brayed out a call and the Fifth fitted his head once again to the receiver. "Yes, sir!" he sang out; and then, to the others, "We're gainin' on her! We're gainin' on her!" Tommy goes on methodically with his dynamo. He is close at hand when wanted; ready, resourceful, devoid of panic. The excitement is on deck, where the shell has struck the house amidships, blown the galley ranges and bakehouse ovens overboard, killed three men outright, and left two more mere moving horrors of the slaughter-house floor. Another, a scullion, with his hand cut off at the wrist, is running round and round, falling over the wreckage, and pursued by a couple of stewards with bandages and friar's balsam.

And on that gray dot, now nine thousand five hundred yards astern, there is excitement, no doubt, for it seems authentic that the *Polynesian's* third shot hit the forward gun-mounting, and the list caused by this, heavy things slewing over, the damage to the deck, the rupture of certain vital oil-pipes, and the wounds of the crew, would account for the *Polynesian*, with her fourteen-point-seven knots, gaining on *U–999*, supposed to have sixteen knots on the surface.

On the bridge of the *Polynesian*, too, there is excitement of sorts. The Chief Mate, who has been rushing about, helping the ammunition carriers, then assisting the stewards with their rough surgery, then up on the bridge again, has come up and is prancing up and down, every now and then looking hard at the Old Man, who stares through the telescope at the gray dot.

Something awful had happened. When that shell hit the ship, the Old Man had called out hoarsely, "That's enough—oh, enough—boats!" and the Chief Mate, to the horror of the young Third Mate, who told Tommy about it, grabbed the Old Man round the waist, whirled him into the chartroom, and slammed the door upon them both. The Third Mate says he saw, through the window, the Chief Mate's fist half an inch from the Old Man's nose, the Old Man looking at it in gloomy silence, and the Chief Mate's eyes nearly jumping out of his head as he argued and threatened and implored. ". . . Gainin' on her," was all the Third Mate could hear, and ". . . For God's sake, sir!" and such-like strong phrases. So the Third Mate says. And then they came out again, and the Mate telephoned to the engine room.

IV

THE company is dwindling now, for, as Tommy gulps his drink and orders two more, it is on the stroke of

nine, when the bars close, and folks are melting group by group into the darkness. Some are bound for home, some for "Eldorado," a dusty barn where one watches dreadful melodramatic films and faints with the heat. The lights are turned still lower. The few shops which have been open in a stealthy way now shut up close. The moonlight throws sharp blue-black shadows on the white dust of the Rue el Nil. The orchestra fades away; chairs are stacked between the tubs, and reproachful glances are cast upon the dozen or so of us who still linger in the gloom.

I become aware that Tommy, in his own odd little semi-articulate fashion, is regarding me as though he had some extraordinary anxiety on his mind. That is the way his expression strikes me. As though he had had some tremendous experience and didn't know what to make of it. I remember seeing something like it in the face of a youth, religiously brought up, who was listening for the first time to an atheist attempting to shake the foundations of his faith. And while I ruminate upon this unusual portent in Tommy's physiognomy, he plunges into the second part of his story. It has its own appeal to those who love and understand the sea.

For the rest of the day the *Polynesian's* course was a series of intricate convolutions on the face of the Atlantic. As the Third Mate put it in his lively

way, you could have played it on a piano. Owing to the wireless room having been partially demolished they were out of touch with the world, and the Commander felt lonely. He even regretted for a while that he had not retired. Was just going to when the war came. He was sixty years old, and had been an easy-going skipper for twenty years now. This—and he wiped his moist face with his handkerchief—this wasn't at all what he had bargained for when he had volunteered to carry on "for the duration of the war." Men dead and dying and mutilated, ship torn asunder. He sat on his settee and stared hard at the head and shoulders of the man at the wheel, adumbrated on the ground-glass window in front of him. He had turned sick at the sight down there——

But the *Polynesian* was still going. Not a bolt, rivet, plate, or rod of her steering and propelling mechanism had been touched, and she was galloping northwest by west at thirteen knots. The Commander hoped for a dark night, for in his present perturbed state the idea of being torpedoed at night was positively horrible. The *Brobdingnagian*, now, was hit at midnight and sunk in three minutes with all hands but two. He wiped his face again. He felt that he wasn't equal to it.

It was dark. All night it was dark and moonless. All night they galloped along up-Channel. All night the Old Man walked the bridge, watching the

blackness ahead. At four o'clock the Mate came on watch and the Old Man felt that he must lie down. He was more than sixty years old, remember, and he had been on his feet for eighteen hours. The Chief Mate, who had been strangely shy since his outrageous behaviour, merely remarked that it looked as if it might be thick presently, and began to pace to and fro.

What happened—if anything did happen—nobody seemed to know; but Tommy, who came off at four, and was enjoying a pipe, a cup of cocoa, and a game of patience in his room, was suddenly flung endways against his wardrobe, and a series of grinding crashes, one of which sent his porthole glass in a burst of fragments over his bedplace, buckled the plates of the ship's side. He remembered that the wardrobe door flew open as he sprang up, and his derby hat bounced to the floor.

He at once skipped down below, where he found the Second and Chief trying to carry out a number of rapid, contradictory orders from the telegraph. And as he joined them the telegraph whirled from "Full astern" to "Stand by," and stopped. They stood by. Tommy was told to go and finish "changing over," which involves opening and shutting several mysterious valves. Having achieved this, he took up his station by the telegraph.

The Chief, clad in a suit of rumpled but elegant pink-and-saffron-striped pajamas, prowled to and

fro in front of the engines like one of the larger carnivora in front of his cage. The Second, with the sleeves of his coat rolled up, as if he were a conjuror and wished to show there was no deception, produced a cigarette from his ear, a match from an invisible ledge under the log-desk, and then caused himself to disappear into the stokehold, whistling a tune at one time very popular in Dublin called "Mick McGilligan's Daughter Mary Anne." He returned in the same mysterious fashion, smoking with much enjoyment, and reporting greaser, firemen, and trimmers all gone up on deck.

And so they waited, those three, and waited, and waited; and the dawn came up, ineffably tender, and far up above them through the skylights they saw the stars through the fog turn pale, and still there was no sign, the telegraph finger pointing, in its mute peremptory way, at "Stand by." They were standing by.

And at length it grew to be past endurance. The Chief spoke sharply into the telephone. Nothing. Suddenly he turned and ordered Tommy to go up and see what was doing. The Second, coming in from the stokehold, reported water in the cross-bunker, but the doors were down. So Tommy went up the long ladders and out on deck and stood stock-still before the great experience of his life. For they were alone on the ship, those three. The boats were gone. There was no sound, save the banging

of the empty blocks and the gurgle and slap of the sea against her sides.

For a moment, Tommy said, he "had no heart." The sheer simplicity of the thing unmanned him, as well it might. He hadn't words—Gone! Behind the horror lay another horror, and it was the remembrance of this ultimate apprehension that I saw in his face to-night. And then he threw himself backward (a North Country football trick), turned, and rushed for the ladder. The other two, down below, saw him there, his eyes feverish, his face dark and anxious, his usually low voice harsh and strident, as he prayed them to drop everything and come up quick—come on—and his voice trailed off into huskiness and heavy breathing.

When they came up, which happened immediately, four steps at a time, they found him sprawled against the bulwarks, his chin on his hands, looking as though to fix the scene for ever on his brain. And they looked too, and turned faint, for there, far across the darkling sparkle of the sea, were the boats, and on the sky-line a smear of smoke. So they stood, each in a characteristic attitude—Tommy asprawl on the rail, the Second half way up the bridge-deck ladder, one hand on his hip, the Chief with his hands behind him, his long legs widely planted, his head well forward, scowling. They were as Tommy put it, "in a state." It wasn't, you know, the actual danger; it was the carrying away

of their faith in the world of living men. Good God! And I imagine the prevailing emotion in their heart at this moment was instinct in the lad's query to me—"What was the use of goin' back, or making a fight of it, if *that* was all they thought of us?" And then the *Polynesian* recalled them from speculations as to the ultimate probity of the human soul by giving a sudden lunge forward. She was sinking.

For a moment, Tommy says, they were "in a state." I should imagine they were. They began running round and round the deck, picking up pieces of wood and dropping them in a shame-faced manner. Suddenly the Chief remembered the raft—an unfortunate structure of oil-barrels and hatches. It was on the foredeck, a frowsy incumbrance devised by the Mate in a burst of ingenuity against the fatal day. When the three of them arrived on the foredeck their hopes sank again. A single glance showed the impossibility of lifting it without steam on the winches. They stood round it and deliberated in silence, tying on life-belts which they had picked up on the bridge deck. The *Polynesian* gave another lunge, and they climbed on the raft and held tight.

The *Polynesian* was in her death throes. She had been cut through below the bridge, and the water was filling the cross-bunker and pressing the air in Number Two hold up against the hatches. While they sat there waiting, the tarpaulins on the hatch ballooned up and burst like a gun-shot, releasing the

air imprisoned within. She plunged again, and the sea poured over her bulwarks and cascaded around them. The raft slid forward against a winch, skinning the Second's leg against a wheel-guard. They held on.

Now, it is perfectly simple in theory to sit on a raft and allow a ship to sink under you. The ship sinks, and the raft, retaining its buoyancy, floats. Quite simple, in theory. In practice, however, many factors tend to vitiate the simplicity of it. Indeed, it becomes so difficult that only by the mercy of God could anybody attempt it and survive. The fore deck of the *Polynesian* was like the fore deck of most ships, cluttered up with hatch combings, winches, ventilator-cowls, steam-pipes, masts, derricks, bollards, snatch-blocks, dead-eyes, ladders, and wire-rope drums. Look forward from the promenade next time you make a trip, and conceive it. As the *Polynesian* subsided, she wallowed. Her centre of gravity was changing every second, and the raft, with its three serious passengers, was charging to and fro as if it were alive and trying to escape. It carried away a ventilator, and then, for one horrible instant, was caught in the standing rigging and canted over. A rush to starboard released it, and the next moment it was free. Only the windlass on the forecastle-head was now above water forward.

They saw nothing more of her. Not that she vanished all at once, but the sucking whirlpools

in which the raft was turning over and reeling back on them kept them fully occupied. And when at last they had coughed up the sea-water and wiped their eyes and looked at each other as they floated in the gentle swell of a smiling summer sea, she was gone. Only one thing destroyed their peace and stood up before them like a spectre; she was lying at the bottom, with her telegraph at "Stand by." The deathless sporting spirit of the race was expressed in these words: "You know, if it hadn't been for *that*, it was a joke, man!"

The moon rides high over Pelusium as we go back to the ship. Tommy and I will keep the morning watch together for once and talk over old times. To-morrow I shall go through the hot white dust of the Rue el Nil and be paid off in the consul's office for my two years' labour. There is a mail boat next week, and perhaps I shall board her, passenger-fashion, and go across the blue Mediterranean, through sunny France, across the English Channel where the *Polynesian* stands by for ever, up through Sussex orchards and over Surrey downs. And perhaps, as I idle away the autumn in the dim beauty of the Essex fenland, and as we drive in the pony-cart through the lanes, we shall stop and the children will say, "If you stand up, you can see the sea."

Perhaps. Who knows?

THE END



